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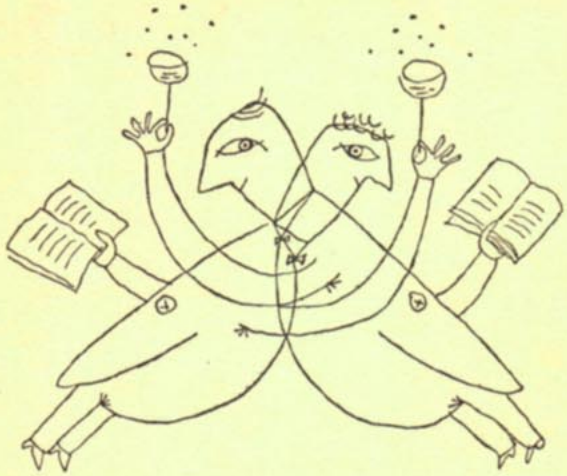

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Editorial

On "Negative Liberalism"

A LIBERAL, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, is someone who is "favourable to changes and reforms tending in the direction of democracy." But what on earth is a "negative liberal"? It is hard to imagine; nevertheless I am assured he exists. This assurance was given me by *the Times Literary Supplement* on October 9th, in a leading article which greeted the appearance of ENCOUNTER. It was a long article and, on the whole, not an unfriendly one. But there were two sentences which struck me as rather provocative:

"A possible criticism of the non-literary articles in ENCOUNTER has to do with the basic attitudes many of them express. These attitudes might be described as characterized by a negative liberalism, or by a liberalism whose main positive feature, at least, appears to be a hatred and fear of Communism."

The passive mood is somewhat disarming. The writer did not, after all, criticise; he simply echoed a "possible" criticism that, were he someone else, he could have thought of. He did not even describe; he merely indicated "what might be described," were there world and time and energy enough. Was he perhaps trying to convey the ineffability of negative liberalism through an exercise in negative journalism? Still, his meaning is really quite clear: a liberalism which today is moved in large measure by a hatred and fear of Communism is no true liberalism.

This would certainly sound odd to a Czech or Polish or Hungarian—or even Russian—liberal; one suspects that, like the rest of us, *The Times Literary Supplement* has some difficulty in remembering their existence. They do exist, however—made of the same flesh and blood as we; and it is not likely that they are offended at the sight of Western liberals being anti-Communist; they might even regard anything else as negative in the extreme.

Of course, not all opponents of Communism are liberal; nor are all opponents of fascism; nor are all opponents of anything. But are we to oppose Communism the less in order to allow General Franco, in splendid isolation, to oppose it the more? Of course, too, liberals ought not to be *exclusively* concerned with Communism: only lunatics are exclusively concerned with any single thing. Liberals ought to be concerned with all "changes and reforms tending in the direction of democracy." But it is a fact that Communism today rules one-third of the human race, and may soon rule more; and that it is the most powerful existing institution which opposes such changes and reforms as liberalism proposes. Why, then, should not liberals, and liberals especially, fear and hate it?

I HAVE the impression that what is behind the remarks of *The Times Literary Supplement* is one of those unwitting, familiar concessions to

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Communist ideology which has become, among many people, an almost mechanical reflex. For Communist propaganda, despite all its striking failures, has gained one enormous—though subtle—success: it has induced in the West, and particularly among Western intellectuals, a bad conscience about opposing Communism. (Who, in the 1930's, was ever called a "negative liberal" because of his fear or hatred of fascism?) By fanatically and deafeningly making use of the empty phrases of the Enlightenment, while "liquidating" the human substance that once gave these phrases life, the Communists have managed to pass themselves off as, in some sense, "positive"; or, as they more often prefer to say, "progressive." The consequence is that a Tsarist or Nazi *pogrom* could outrage the world; but anyone who gets excited about mass murder in the Soviet Union reveals a lack of a sense of balance: his emotions are suspect, and it is assumed that he must be an ex-Communist with a pathological fixation.

True, the non-Communist world has sufficient cause for a bad conscience. (There, I myself am at it: why "non-Communist world"? Why not "the free world"? The answer is that Communist propaganda has persuaded us that "the free world" is a bit of hypocritical rhetoric. Technically, the point is only too well taken: but not when *they* make it. As against the Communist world, ours is the free world, without inverted commas.) Well, then, the free world has sufficient cause for a bad conscience; there will always be sufficient cause, so long as men and societies exist. In this sense, our bad conscience is our badge of honour. But before Communism—before this grand inquisitor, are we to kneel as if before a confessor? That would be negative liberalism indeed.

Irving Kristol

About Our Authors

WILFRED NOYCE, who began climbing mountains in Wales at the age of 12, was in charge of mountaineering equipment on the recent expedition that succeeded in conquering Mount Everest. In civilian life, so to speak, he is a teacher of modern languages at Charterhouse. He is also a writer of distinction, who has published several volumes on mountaineering, as well as a book of poems, *Michelangelo*, just issued by Heinemann. . . . RITA HINDEN was for ten years secretary of the Fabian Colonial Bureau, and is now its honorary secretary. She is the author of *Empire and After*, *Plan for Africa*, and several other studies in colonial policy. As she recounts in her article, she was a member of the British Guiana Constitutional Commission, which drew up the now suspended constitution for that turbulent country. . . . F. R. ALLEMANN, a leading Swiss journalist, has been touring the Middle East. . . . FRANÇOIS BONDY is the editor of *Preuves*, our sister-monthly published in Paris. . . . JOHN MORRIS is controller of the B.B.C.'s Third Programme, and was formerly head of its Far Eastern Service. Like Mr. Noyce, he is also a mountaineer, having been a member of the 1922 and 1936 Mount Everest expeditions. . . . FRANZ BORKENAU's *European Communism* was published last year by Faber. It was Mr. Borkenau who was the author of the most sensationally accurate prediction of 1953: at the time of the "Jewish doctors' plot" he wrote an article in the German press in which he predicted flatly that we would soon be informed of Stalin's death.

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Wilfred Noyce

Mount Everest Diary

[These extracts come from a journal written on the march and on the mountain, in the spring and early summer of 1953. The poems were composed at the places described, and may be the "highest" yet to have been written.—W. N.]

Risingo. Fourth day out from Katmandu. 5,000 *feet. March* 13*th*

CAMP is on a headland jutting over the river-bed, 2,000 feet below. In the northern distance, snow peaks of the Gauri Sankar range, seen through haze yesterday, have now disappeared; but one still feels the presence of those astonishing forms. Pine and shrub on every slope. Risingo temple is a square white building, prayer flags twenty feet high on bamboo poles surrounding the low-walled compound. In the compound we camp. While waiting, photographed modern paintings inside the porch. The Buddhist Round of Existence glaring out over the village.

Sudden hail, just as tea appeared, 3.30. Stones as big as the traditional moth-balls. Afterwards conducted around temple by Sherpas. Very dark; butter lamps a feeble flame. Large and ugly images of the Buddha, family, and disciples, before which our Sherap (one of the Sherpas, a defrocked lama it appears) prostrated himself. Two hundred books of Tamang scripture, but nobody visible who can read them. Erotic paintings on walls.

Storm started 6 p.m., with thunder and wind first, then the downpour, flattening everything. Rushed out to pile loads on to tent flaps. A prayer flagpole cracked and broke, fortunately nobody below it. . . .

Taksindhu. 9,600 *feet. March* 21*st*

STARTED up pass for Taksindhu, then entered charming small glade of primula and rhododendron. Impossible to resist. Lay and watched hills opposite, climbing from pine to grass, from grass to rock and snow. Peace, and an utter dislike of all action. Why go plodding on to climb Everest? John is probably butterfly-hunting. I have not the least desire to swat that butterfly, to pick the primula and classify it, to identify the hills opposite, or gauge the weather. These things are just there, seeping into me, making it absurd that my everyday self should be bothering with oxygen masks, coolies, food, chances of climbing a mountain.

Thus far I suppose I am a poet, and so I suppose would most people be, in a place like this, distinction from temporary laziness being very slight. The real poet turns this receptive experience, all experience, into something itself as beautiful as these hills and flowers.

Pointed Peak. 19,200 *feet. April* 2*nd*

WENT on, still using oxygen, for practice. Liked it, though the apparatus is tricky and bumped about over boulders. Reached summit 11.30 and lay about for a most glorious three quarters of an hour in hot sun. Views over Everest, Makalu, Cho Oyu, Gyachung Kang, all the peaks. Both sides of Everest visible, a gaunt look, remarkably free from snow. A tilted grey pyramid drawing the eye from everything else. Long sweep of slabs on the northern side, with yellow rock band slanting up. It looks much easier that northern way.

As usual we examined our ridge, south summit to summit, and the face of Lhotse. No telling what that stretch will be like. South Col not quite visible, but Lhotse stands up finely. If only we could get weather like today's!

EVEREST FROM THE WEST

Everest : terror and love :
No veil is upon you, no cloud

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Doubts the huge hump, mighty monument
set on earth,
Harp of the wind, snow-song and avalanche
tears,—
And tinier tale of men; but men are so proud,
Their mole story is hill-high. Glorious their
one wish absurd
To stand on that cone, one moment enough.
Aloud
They recite the story: Changtse, North Col,
the tilt
Of slab swinging sky-bound; yellow band
thrust in black
And the wicked steps; here, perhaps here they
fell,
Those two. And the others went on, gasped
and loathed.
The cone still taunts them; storm and the
years fret on,
Terror and love remain. Again the men come
Drawn from all home, comfort and ease, to
endure
One spell and be done; suffer, and win a
crown,
Memory's store for life. Look then, the south,
An easier slant, one tiny point, and between
Our glasses grip in hot fingers of hope; there,
there,
That is our ridge; down still to South Col, joy
gone
In the sting of wind on a cheek. Now it is calm,
Now beckons to hope in the afternoon's
serene.
The heart-break breath, dim of the eyes, the
swing
Of axe upon ice are hard to disravel from
beauty's dream,
Dream of a summit ten thousand feet up, all seen
And hardly known.

Everest: terror and love.
We fear and are drawn, love your infinite sides
And loathe our Lilliput crawling. Men we
descend,
Conquerors never. So soon is the ant-marked
trace
Of our step disappeared. Again, quiet reigns
And the choughs wheel in a world dead once
again.
Terror and love are done.

The Everest Icefall. Camp II. 19,600 *feet. May 7th*

ARRIVED 1.20 p.m. with Sherpa "low level" carry. Icefall different each time. Valley below II might be another mountain. Before, it was straight going. Now, a crossing of unsteady blocks (fallen? rolled?) then a wide in and out, into a gap, out and up. Two mysterious great towers have appeared at the head of the valley, watching or menacing. A big step on to plank bridge at top crevasse.

Camp II more desolate than ever on its platform. Snowing still, everything shrouded. One tent half-collapsed, and there are only three for ten of us. Put guys in and must change site, as each tent has sunk into a little hollow, bumpy-floored. Got the stove going. Snow continued all afternoon, sufficient to justify sleeping-bag, mug of tea, and out with the diary.

At 5.30 a parting of mist, lightening of the air. Climbed out just as soup and tinned steak arrived. They had to wait, while I stood in a wonder at Pumori, a diamond of sparkling fresh snow opposite, unveiled bit by bit. Curves of icefall around camp like cream waves, so soft that you want to stroke them. Then they bend over suddenly into green to black bottomless pits. Blue and green for the under-surface, cream for the top swirls. All orderly, like bricks set by a giant child's hand. A glimpse far up the icefall, at the shining slants of Nuptse ridges plunging into the Cwm. . . .

ICEFALL

Silent stream
Once a god took note of you,
Struck with his rod, ordered you guardian of
treasuries.
Then your voices were stilled, your babble,
your slithering
Cool between walls' primeval dream to the
valley-bed.
Slowly your level rush broke, the great pits
Yawned as your deep waves toppled to
motionless,
Yawned as the waters crunched to icy, to
cavernous,
Yawned as your lower rush foamy, cascading,

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Halted and tangled and stayed. The little waves
creamed up
Frothed to a fall. But so slow! Silence and
night's shade,
Only these mark the change.
Wavelets are pinnacles
Pressed by the silent stream of above to
oblivion.
Built for a day, a week, they fall, and confusion
Gapes in the spray of blocks that have once
been
Reared with the hugeness of marble, ghost
city ruined
At the day's shaft.
Still the river creeps onward,
Still in each fringed crevasse the wind of silence
Echoes the trump that once froze. Mortal man
pressing
Sees astonished the rift; as once, land-faring,
The Israelites stared, dumb at the parting of
waters.

Choughs

ABOVE 17,000 feet the only living creatures seen among the mountains, since we saw no Abominable Snowmen, were the choughs, which circled daily around our camps. The black bodies with inquisitive beaks, strutting about on orange legs like Elizabethan courtiers, were familiar figures every time a cookhouse was set up. The garbage area could always be located by the squabbles and pecking down the slope.

Often the choughs were seen very high; we saw them at the South Col, and knew that General Norton had recorded them at 28,000 feet on the north side. They seemed impervious to weather, black crosses wheeling and darting far above cloud seas; and yet comic and friendly when they came to earth to scuffle for the odd biscuit among the tea-leaves.

BASE CAMP, APRIL

The Chough

Beautifully black, with frilly ruff,
Pecking at the snow is the immortal chough.
Solitude's inhabitant, over the dead
Glacier he wings to lonely bed;
Yet companion by nature, a friendly bird,
Gracing our company with cries absurd,
Foraging the scum of tea-leaves, abased
To fatten on muck no other will taste.
Are the worms scarce? Or do you prefer
Company of humans as a higher sphere?
Unasked you encourage us; mocking our pain
Fly to twenty thousand and back again
Before we are started; and higher as we climb
You laugh from Pumori at our laggard time
And again are back—just right for tea,
Cheerful, untired, still fancy-free,
Ready for a bite of whatever may clatter
Down from our tent-site: gobble, gobble,
chatter!
You accompanied Norton to heights hard won,
Mallory, perhaps, you saw dragged down,
And Herzog dropping the fateful glove.
But here you are, back, as if we were your love.
No story for us of immortal dead,
Only one vast, oceanic greed.
Such is the chough. . . .

The Face of Lhotse. Camp VII pitched. 24,000 feet. May 17th

I WAITED, then went on alone with rope, rucksack and pitons. A short steep slope, an agony of fumbling with the impedimenta, then up into a pleasant snowy hollow, really right under the big serac (tower) which hides the Camp VII site, but I didn't know it. Round this point my pace slowed distinctly, from twenty steps then a pause (to gasp for breath over axe-head) down to six and a pause. Way wound up the outside of this great ice-tower, a long traverse on big steps over ice, then back into the little gully and at long last level ground and Ed's dump. Noticed a special difference over the last bit. Now going really *slow*.

Tent to pitch. A weary business, stamping out rectangle of flat snow, then slinging the tent across. Both of us moving with that leaden tiredness of dream, stopping every minute to breathe. Blazing sun on white snow. Fingers clumsy at guy-ropes.

Later. Above Camp VII. That afternoon

MADE up leftward, gingerly avoiding small crevasse. Traverse to South Col so near yet so far. At 3 p.m. stopped, reckoned height nearly 25,000 feet and the immediate way clear. We had both been going better. A

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step or two and a pause, but this time happy to plug another step or two after that pause. We basked in shirt sleeves and marvelled. White valley below, and toy tents of Camp V 3,000 feet down. Nearness of Everest's summit as of Snowdon's; but as soon as you look at that white swish of slope leading ever upward to the Col, you stop and begin to wonder. Yet there is the black, ordinary-looking pyramid beyond. Just another mountain.

Back at Advance Base Camp (21,200 feet) after a second visit to the South Col (26,000 feet) and above. May 30th

Two steps at most, then a pause. Just breathed, leaning over my axe for easier position and to get load of 40 lb. more squarely on my back. Pasang Phutar with 60 lb. going strong behind me, but more than two or three steps I could not take; just breathed and breathed, chest heaving, and loved it. Life swings back into focus and I wonder what was wrong before. Beyond, and now below, is the wonderful wind-torn razor ridge of Nuptse.

At 12.50 a shout from behind. Looked up at two small figures just descending from south summit, which from here looks the main summit, looking rather like Snowdon from near the top of P.y.G track. Ed and Tenzing. Greg had told me they were seen passing south summit on the way up at 9 a.m. Felt we must push on fast to meet them, but couldn't have gone faster to save my own life. The last 500 feet took an hour and a half.

BREATHLESS

Heart aches
To mouth's pant,
The dry air
Sorry, scant.
Legs lift
And why at all?
Loose drift,
Heavy fall.
Prod the snow
Its easiest way;
A flat step
Is holiday.
Look up,
The far stone
Is many miles
Far and alone.
Grind the breath
Once more and on,
Don't look up
Till journey's done.

Must look up,
Glasses are dim.
Wrench of hand
Is breathless limb.
Pause one step,
Breath floods back;
Swallow once,
Dry throat is slack.
Then on
To the far stone;
Don't look up,
Count the steps done.
One step,
Single beat,
Stone no nearer
Dragging feet.
Heart aches
To mouth's pant,
The dry air
Sorry, scant.

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Dylan Thomas: Memories and Appreciations

I. DANIEL JONES

Our first meeting, nearly thirty years ago, is described in *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog*. I forget how the fight began. Dylan was slight, with curly hair, large soft eyes and full lips; he looked almost effeminate, but he was very tough. My own appearance was much the same, and I wore spectacles as well. Each of us seemed an easy victim, but as soon as the fight started contempt changed to respect and we became friends. This meant almost daily meetings between us for the next ten years, at his house, at my house, or, during school hours, in Cwmdonkin Park. We read aloud to one another, usually our own poems, and exchanged criticism; and some part of the time was always spent in writing, either separately or in collaboration. Music was not forgotten; I played my compositions to Dylan, and we extemporised together on the piano in four-handed duets, or on strange instruments of our own devising.

Five, Cwmdonkin Drive, and Warmley, the two houses, were very different in atmosphere. At Dylan's we had a gas fire that spluttered, an asthmatic sheep that coughed in the field opposite, and always a few owls hooting from the woods. I remember one terrifying night when we stared at one another in the gathering darkness until our heads became griffin and wyvern heads.

Warmley was not so mysterious, but it was more popular for several reasons; there were, for example, the Broadcasting Station and the Cricket Pitch. The Cricket Pitch in the back garden was about twelve feet long; every fine evening we played there without subtlety, hurling or driving the ball with the utmost force at one another, while old Harding, the neighbour, leaned on the wall smoking his pipe, sometimes calling out with perfect solemnity "Well played, sir!" and finally asking, with a certain wistfulness, "Will you be playing again tomorrow evening?"

Through the W.B.S. system, which consisted of two loudspeakers connected to the pick-up of a radiogram, we were able to broadcast from the upstairs to the downstairs rooms. I still have some of the programmes: "The Rev. Percy will play three piano pieces, Buzzards at Dinner, Salute to Admiral Beattie, and Badgers Beneath My Vest"; "Rebecca Mn will give a recital on the Rebmetpes"; "Locomotive Bowen, the one-eyed cowhand, will give a talk on the Rocking Horse and Varnishing Industry"; "Zoilredb Pogoho will read his poem Fiffokorp." These broadcasters became real people to us, and we collaborated in a biography of the greatest of them, Percy. Here is a description of one of the trying experiences we inflicted on Percy's old mother: "Near the outskirts of Panama the crippled negress was bitten severely and time upon time, invariably upon the nape, by a white hat-shaped bird."

In prose collaboration we had to consult together all the time; the alternate sentence method proved unsuccessful. In poetry collaborations, however, we always wrote alternate lines; I had the odd-numbered lines and Dylan the even-numbered, and we made it a rule that neither of us should suggest an alteration in the other's work. These poems, of which I still have about two hundred, are a different matter from the W.B.S. fooling. It is still play, but it is what I would call serious play. The poetic style of Walter Bram, as we called ourselves, is bafflingly inconsistent; it is fragile, furious, laconic, massive, delicate,

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incantatory, cool, flinty, violent, Chinese, Greek, and shocking. One poem may begin "You will be surprised when I remain obdurate," and the next, "I lay under the currant trees and told the beady berries about Jesus." Some of the poems are very, very beautiful; very. Especially those that tell of singularly gentle and godlike action by the third person plural.

> "They had come from the place high on the coral hills
> Where the light from the white sea fills the soil with ascending grace.
> And the sound of their power makes motion as steep as the sky,
> And the fruits of the great ground lie like leaves from a vertical flower.
> They had come from the place; they had come and had gone again
> In a season of delicate rain, in a smooth ascension of grace."

We had word obsessions: everything at one time was "little" or "white;" and sometimes an adjective became irresistibly funny in almost any connection: "innumerable bananas," "wilful moccasin," "a certain Mrs. Prothero." These word games, and even the most facetious of our collaborations, had a serious experimental purpose, and there is no doubt that they played an important part in Dylan's early poetic development.

His own poetry passed in ten years from simple lyricism, reminiscent of W. H. Davies or de la Mare, to the violent imagery of the poems that first appeared in Victor Neuberg's corner of the *Sunday Referee*; on the way he came more or less under the influence of early Yeats, Aldington, Sacheverell Sitwell, Lawrence, and Hopkins, in that order; but of course there were many others.

Apart from purely literary influences Dylan was at this time self-sufficient. At the school, where his father was Senior English Master, everything offered to him was rejected. It is true that he edited the school magazine and wrote nearly all of it; that he acted in the dreary Drinkwater plays with which we were afflicted; and even argued in the debating society, if a triumphant use of the illogical can be called arguing; but school subjects were treated by him with disdain.

This was consistent; at that time, and throughout his life, Dylan hated the academic. But in those early years his antipathy had less discrimination; it was directed not only against the fossils but against much that was significantly alive as well, if he happened to find for it an academic association. For this reason, perhaps, his enthusiasm was limited almost wholly to contemporary verse; poets of the school text-book were suspect, and for the time being he kept them at arm's length. Passionately absorbed in language, he had no interest in languages, preferring to take whatever might trickle through the translator's sieve. For him, the impact of literature could only be weakened, and its vitality robbed, by study; even the word "literature" itself was suspect in its associations. The conventions of prosody came under the ban; Dylan was aware of them, but he contemptuously reserved them for humorous verse or parodies. For his serious poetry he preferred then, and afterwards, a convention of his own, the syllabic number of the line; this convention, while giving characteristic limitation to a poem, could never be formulated for poetry: its life could co-extend only with the life of one poem.

This early stand against the academic was very valuable to Dylan; he would have needed twice the time to accomplish all that he did accomplish if he had not discerned clearly and from the beginning the things that were of no use to him, or if he had not steadily ignored them. In these early years, words occupied Dylan's mind to the exclusion even of the things with which they have some connection: to him, the cushat and the ring-dove were as different as the ostrich and the hummingbird. Later, there was a change. He passed through the narrow gate of words and found a world more spacious than the world he had left, filled with the same things, but magically transformed.

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II. THEODORE ROETHKE

IT IS difficult for me to write anything, stunned as I am, like many another, by the news of his death. I knew him for only three brief periods, yet I had come to think of him as a younger brother: unsentimentally, perhaps, and not protective as so many felt inclined to be—for he could fend for himself against male and female; but rather someone to be proud of, to rejoice in, to be irritated with, or even jealous of. He was so rich in what he was that each friend or acquaintance seemed to carry a particular image of him: each had his special Dylan, whom he cherished and preserved intact, or expanded into a figure greater than life: a fabulous ageing cherub, capable of all things. I think Thomas often knew exactly what each person thought him to be, and, actor that he was, would live up to expectations when it suited his mood. Often this would take the form of wry, ironical, deprecatory self-burlesque: as if he wanted to remind himself of the human condition. Like Chaplin, whom he loved, he could laugh at himself without being coy, and call up tenderness in those who rarely felt it.

The demands on his body and spirit were many; his recklessness, lovely. But even his superb energies felt the strain, I should say, on lecture tours when he was set upon by fools. Any kind of social pretentiousness disturbed him, and particularly in academia. The bourgeois he did not love. And he could, and did, act outrageously, on occasion, snarling from one side of his mouth to a gabbling faculty wife that nobody ever came to America except to get fees and drink free liquor; only to wish, wistfully, the next five minutes, to someone he respected, that he could stay in this country for a time, and maybe even teach: show the young what poetry really was. But even in black moods, his instinctive sweetness and graciousness would flash through. More than any other writer or artist I know, he really cared for and cherished his fellow men.

I first met him in 1950, in New York. John Brinnin had written twice that Dylan Thomas wanted to meet me. I found this hard to believe, but when I came down from Yaddo in May, still groggy from my own private wars with the world, it seemed to be so.

Someone had lent me an apartment up-town; he was staying down-town on Washington Square. We sometimes alternated: one would rout out the other, different days. He had been built up to me as a great swill-down drinker, a prodigious roaring boy out of the Welsh caves. But I never knew such a one. Some bubbly or Guinness or just plain beer, maybe; and not much else. We would sit around talking about poetry; about Welsh picnics; life on the Detroit river, and in Chicago (he greatly admired "The Man with the Golden Arm") the early Hammett; and so on. Or maybe bumble across town to an old Marx Brothers movie, or mope along, poking into book shops or looking into shop windows. One night he insisted I come along, with others, when some fellow Welshmen, in America for twenty years, entertained. And then I saw what he meant to his own people: to those hard-boiled business men Thomas was the first citizen of Wales, and nothing less.

Sometimes he would recite—and what that was many know; but I think off-stage he was even better, the rhythms more apparent, the poems rendered exactly for what they were. I remember he thought "After the Funeral," creaked a bit at the beginning: that he had not worked hard enough on it.

He had a wide, detailed and active knowledge of the whole range of English literature; and a long memory. I noticed one day a big pile of poems—Edward Thomas, Hardy, Ransom, Housman, W. R. Rodgers, Davies, and others—all copied out in his careful hand. He said he never felt he knew a poem, what was in it, until he had done this. His taste was exact and specific; he was loyal to the poem, not the poet; and the list of contemporaries he valued was a good deal shorter than might generally be supposed.

He was one of the great ones, there can be no doubt of that. And he drank his own blood, ate of his own marrow to get at some of that material. His poems need no words, least of all mine, to defend or explain them.

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III. LOUIS MACNEICE

YEATS described the poet as one who knows "that Hamlet and Lear are gay." No poet of our time was a better example of this than Dylan Thomas. When his first work appeared it was astonishingly new and yet went back to the oldest of our roots—roots which had long been ignored, written off, or simply forgotten. He was not just a poet among poets; he was, as has often been remarked, a bard, with the three great bardic virtues of faith, joy, and craftsmanship—and, one could add, of charity. Many of his poems are concerned with death or the darker forces, yet they all have the joy of life in them. And many of his poems are obscure but it is never the obscurity of carelessness; though I, for one, assumed it might be when I first read his early work in the 1930's. Lastly, all the poems (a rare thing in this age of doubt) are suffused both with a sense of value, a faith in something that is simultaneously physical and spiritual, and with (what is equally rare in an age of carping) a great breath of generosity, goodwill not only towards men but towards all created things.

The next few years will obviously see a spate of writing about Thomas—his vision, imagery, technique, etc.—and the writers will be beset by two distinct and opposite dangers—the danger of trying to equip him too exactly with a literary pedigree and the danger of isolating him as a sport, a Villon figure, a wild man who threw up works of genius without knowing what he was doing. The former mistake has been made for years by various academic critics, often Americans, who have dwelt at length on Thomas's relations to ancient Welsh poetry or to Rimbaud; though he has something in common with both (and though Wales in general and Swansea in particular were the most important factors in his make-up), it should be remembered that he had never read Rimbaud and could not read Welsh. As for the "wild man" conception, immediately after Thomas's death it was exploited in its most disgusting and imbecile form by certain of our daily papers. Of course Thomas liked pints of beer (so what? he also liked watching cricket) but he did not write his poems "with a pint in one hand"; no writer of our time approached his art in a more reverent spirit or gave it more devoted attention. One glance at a Thomas manuscript will show the almost incredible trouble he took over those elaborate arabesques that could yet emerge as fresh as any of the "woodnotes wild" expected from the born lyric poet. In fact, he *was* a born lyric poet but it was a birthright he worked and worked to secure.

His lyrical gift, though the most important, was only one of several gifts. He had a roaring sense of comedy, as shown in many of his prose works. He had a natural sense of theatre, as was shown not only in his everyday conversation but in those readings of poetry (and his taste, by the way, was catholic) which earned him such applause both here and in the U.S. He was moreover a subtle and versatile actor, as he proved repeatedly in radio performances. *And* he "took production." Though his special leaning (as was natural, given his astonishing voice) was to the sonorous and emotional, he enjoyed playing character parts, especially comic or grotesque ones, such as a friendly Raven which he played for me once in a dramatised Norwegian folk-tale. He could even "throw away" if required to. And in all these sidelines—as in all his verse and prose—there appeared the same characteristic blend of delight in what he was doing and care as to how he did it.

This does not seem to me the moment for analysing Dylan Thomas. He is assured of a place, and a unique one, in the history of English poetry. But, when such a personality dies, his friends are not much in the mood for literary criticism. What we remember is not a literary figure to be classified in the text-book but something quite unclassifiable, a wind that bloweth where it listeth, a wind with a chuckle in its voice and news from the end of the world. It is too easy to call him unconventional—which is either an understatement or a red herring. It is too easy to call him Bohemian—a word which implies affectations which were quite alien to Thomas. It is too easy even to call him anarchist—a better word but too self-conscious an attitude. Thomas was an actor—and would that more poets were—

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but he was not an attitudiniser. He eschewed politics but he had a sense of justice; that he once visited Prague proves nothing as to his leftness or rightness; it merely is one more proof that he thought men everywhere were human. Both in his life and his work he remained honest to the end. This, combined with his talents, made him a genius.

IV. MARJORIE ADIX

The following is an account of a conference held by Dylan Thomas with students at the University of Utah last spring.

I MET Dylan Thomas yesterday—that doesn't mean I rushed up and told him how wonderful he was; it means that I sat three feet away from him in the Union lounge while Professor Brewster Ghiselin and his following questioned him for an hour and a half. Throughout it all you could feel the relationship between Dylan Thomas and Ghiselin—tremendous respect on both sides, and yet too great a distance ever to be close. Both of them shy men, really, who have hung their souls out on the line, yet kept firmly established egos: Ghiselin, the scholar-poet and host, never quite sure that his man wouldn't get up and leave through the open window; and Thomas, out of place, uneasy at being exposed on all sides, yet on his best behaviour, sticking it out.

Ghiselin led off with a brief introduction and then asked why a poet went around on a reading tour. Thomas, looking down at the table, facing no one, said softly: "My God, that's a hard question. I'm afraid I shall have to answer it straight: it's a way of seeing the country and I haven't any money. It's a matter of ego as well."

Ghiselin: "But why is the poetry read aloud? Does it aid understanding?"

Thomas: "People come to have a look at me. Here's a little fat man come to make a fool of himself, they think, and since they don't listen to what I read, it doesn't matter whether I make sense or not. . . . But that isn't quite fair of me —I am enjoying myself."

Ghiselin: "You read much on the B.B.C. Do you feel that poetry must be read aloud before it is complete? Does it bring you closer to the meaning?"

Thomas: "Yes—perhaps it helps in the interpretation or emphasis. It brings you closer to the poet."

Question from a student: "Do you listen to the sound of your own words? Is that as important to you as the rhyme and metre?"

Thomas: "Oh, God, that's a hard one too. Yes—you can struggle with rhyme and metre and style and still not have a poem. I'm sorry I'm not answering the way you would like."

Student: "But why do you read your own poetry?"

Thomas: "For the noise it makes. And for the memory of the experience of writing it. But it has already said everything it had to say."

Student: "Do you say the words aloud as you write them?"

Thomas: "Yes. That's why I live in a hut on a cliff."

Another student: "Is it necessary for a poem to have an outcome? Robert Frost says that a poem should be resolved. It should not be too obscure to be understood. I have difficulty in understanding you, especially your early sonnets."

Thomas: "Then you should read Robert Frost. . . . But you are right: to the poet, at least, there is always an outcome. Those sonnets are only the writings of a boily boy in love with shapes and shadows on his pillow."

Ghiselin: "I've wondered about the sonnets. I could never see anything very deep in them. It's good to know I need search no further."

Thomas: "Well, they would be of interest to another boily boy. Or a boily girl." (Long pause.) "Boily-girly."

Here Thomas laughed to himself and seemed lost in very amusing word combinations—while everyone sat petrified, until somebody brought him back to us:

"Is it ever fair deliberately to confuse the reader?"

Thomas: "I thought someone would take me up on that. No—it is a deliberate avowal of

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your own inefficiency. It is impossible to be too clear. You can state too bluntly all you know, or put down very clearly what you intend, which may be very narrow and even cruel. But we don't know about anything. Especially people, nobody knows. There are scientific terms, but—why doesn't the water fly out of the ocean when the earth whirls? Because it is a ball of magic. It is impossible to be too clear. I am trying for more clarity now. At first I thought it enough to leave an impression of sound and feeling and let the meaning seep in later, but since I've been giving these broadcasts and reading other men's poetry as well as my own, I find it better to have more meaning at first reading."

Ghiselin: "But, on the other hand, isn't it possible to narrow and fix a meaning to the exclusion of richer levels of meaning?"

Thomas: "Oh God, isn't an education wonderful!"

Ghiselin: "I shall be silent from now on."

Thomas: "No, I mean it as a compliment. You say things so well, and I'm ashamed to be flippant and go down the side alleys. . . ."

Student: "Do you find it necessary to study other things in order to find increasing satisfaction in your own poetry?"

Thomas: "There is never any satisfaction—that's why I write another poem. Do I study other things? Yes, people. . . ." (Long pause, the questioner nodding thoughtfully), then: "Me!"

Another student: "Why do you write poetry, Mr. Thomas?"

Thomas: "Because I have the time. Because I have to live too; (mumbled) I don't know why. . . . It is very slow work, however. Only five poems published in the last six years. It is slow, but sometimes there is just nothing better to do. Sometimes it feels very good to have a blank piece of paper in front of you, and you put down the first line. Then you look at all the paper and think, Now I've got to rhyme this. And it's work! Oh God, it's awful! . . . I write some very bad poems."

Student: "What happens to them?"

Thomas: "I keep them—too much of an egoist to throw them away. But neither do I do as Rossetti did, who buried them with his wife and had to dig them up later. I keep them in a drawer."

Student: "What do you do with them?"

Thomas: "Nothing. When it's written it's finished."

Ghiselin: "Perhaps you don't read your old poems over because there is a chance you might become infatuated with them and continue to write the same poem over and over. Some poets do."

Thomas: "Jove! I never thought of that! I wonder what's in the drawer." (Pantomime.) "This isn't so bad after all! Delightful!" (He was gone again.)

Student: "Who decides whether your poems are good or bad?"

Thomas: "I do. Nobody reads the bad ones."

Student: "Then you don't ask a publisher for an opinion?"

Thomas: "Oh, no. If he didn't like one that I thought was good, it would be too terrible."

Student: "If your own poetry gives you no satisfaction, is there any which does?"

Thomas: "That's easy: Shakespeare!"

Student: "Who is the best of the moderns?"

Thomas: "The nice thing about poetry is that it isn't a competitive field. There isn't any *best*; but I do like Thomas Hardy, D. H. Lawrence, W. H. Auden and——" (Here, Dr.—— on my left squealed in surprise, and I missed the fourth name.)

Student: "How do you tell whether a poem is good or not?"

Thomas: "If I like it."

Student: "But what do you go by?"

Thomas: "I like one because it is better than the others." (Silence.) "Before I find a poem I like I have to pass over a great many that I don't like. When I find one I like, I read it. I don't know why. The big problem is to find the poem, then read it—hang by your ears from the chandeliers, or however you read poetry —and enjoy it."

Ghiselin: "Perhaps we should do as you suggest and like a poem because we think it better than others, but students have to pull it apart and analyse why they like it and write it all down for a professor."

Thomas: "People who think they know

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T. S. Eliot find it unbelievable that he enjoys Kipling, that rowdy rhymster. That is, the people who think they know Kipling too. Some of his poetry is excellent."

(Very long pause. Dylan Thomas sips at his glass of water like a kitten bobbing its nose in a saucer. The glass is still full at the end of the session after at least a dozen embarrassed sips.)

Student: "Do you address your noise only to yourself?"

Thomas: "Oh no. No. Yes—well, I *am* lots of people. I think I am lots of people at any rate. Of course, I know, and the birds know, I'm only a fat little fool ranting on a cliff, but it seems that I am lots of people."

Young lady: "Has your style changed?"

Thomas: "Style? Yes. No—I'm still after the same things if that's what you mean."

Ghiselin: "Your poetry seems to open little doors in quite ordinary and common events, sometimes by only shifting an image slightly to one side to let in the new idea."

Thomas: "How nicely you say it! That is exactly what I would like my poetry to do some day."

Lady: "Do you revise?"

Thomas: "No, I work it out a phrase at a time. It is very slow, but when it is once finished, all the revision has been done, and I don't change it."

Lady: "Then it may take several days?"

Thomas: "Months. Years. It might never be finished. But I am a patient man."

Ghiselin: "You always seem to put in your poetry just what you are seeing at the moment —the heron, and the birds near the estuary, for instance?"

Thomas: "Yes—yes. I wanted to write about the cliff, and there was a crow flying above it, and that seemed a good place to begin, so I wrote about the crow. Yes, if I see a bird, I put it in whether it belongs or not."

Ghiselin: "Do you leave it there?"

Thomas: "If it is happy and at home in the poetry I do. But really I should get a blind for my window."

Student: "But you do have some idea of what you are going to say?"

Thomas: "Sometimes. You don't just sit and wait for the little doors to open. Twenty years ago I would have said 'inspiration.' It's hard work. But sometimes the mood is enough. Say a poet is gay and he wants to write a gay poem —about anything. It is spring, or he has a new pair of shoes, or his wife has left him. Everything is gaiety. But then, suddenly, in the middle of the poem, he might miss his wife. It would be a very sad poem. You can't always follow your original plan."

Another student: "Do you pay any attention to critics, ——, for instance?"

Thomas: "Yes. Sometimes I wake up in the night and wonder about them. I don't know what they have against me. As far as —— goes, it is a personal matter I'm sure. He just can't abide me. He can't stand to read me at all. I don't know why. I pay attention to the praise too—it's easier to take, although it isn't any truer and I don't believe it any more than the other. I mean, I can't be bought with a few sentences. I don't think they will change me. I know what kind of a man I am." (Quietly.) "Thirty-seven years with the same head. . . ."

And so it went on, until Ghiselin asked Thomas to read one of his poems. He arose for the first time, gathered up his five books and stuffed them in his briefcase. I thought he was offended, but he finished stowing them away, kept one out, and turned back to us:

"I brought all these books in case I would be too frightened to answer your questions. I haven't answered them, but I wasn't frightened. Thank you for asking me."

He smiled and sat down again, and began to talk in a soft voice about his father, who, he said, had been a militant atheist, whose atheism had nothing to do with whether there was a god or not, but was a violent and personal dislike for God. He would glare out of the window and growl: "It's raining, blast Him!" or, "The sun is shining—Lord, what foolishness!" He went blind and was very ill before he died. He was in his eighties, and he grew soft and gentle at the last. Thomas hadn't wanted him to change. . . .

And all at once the little poet began to read, and his voice raged and surged with power and anger and a terrible desolation. He read "Do not go gentle into that good night." It was slow and rhythmic and deep. His eyes were

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bent down on the book, but he was not reading, for they would remain fixed for a long time and then wander over both pages for a moment and then freeze again. I can't express how startling the change was in him, from the shy, humble, apologetic, patiently eager man, to this tidal wave of humanity. I was uneasy at first because I felt that in either one position or the other he was only acting, but I could find no trace of insincerity ever. I suppose he knows best. He is lots of people.

V. GEORGE BARKER

It was on the worst day of this or any other month of the year that he died, and no one knows why. I find it very hard to write about his death, perhaps because, for the time being, the language is at a loss, as well as we. In time to come, if there is any worthwhile time to come, much will be said about him that we do not know how to say now, not only because he was a great poet, but because he was also a very great person. But, writing this as I do so soon after his death, I have to think about him in a way which those who will write of him later may not do: I mean as a living man whom one cannot believe dead, because he had no right to die at this time. Why has he died?

He has died not because there was no more life left in him, but because the world as it is has become an intolerable place for such a man, and insupportable to such a spirit. And yet I do not think that he would ever have acknowledged this intolerableness of the world in so many words, for, as I saw him, he loved everything as much as anybody ever could. But I think he did so in spite of what everything was, as well as because of what it was. And this antimony is a killer.

The pathologist's opinion that he died "of a brain ailment of unknown origin" simply illustrates the undisguised intervention of the powers of darkness in our affairs: for this is one of their greatest as it is their latest triumph. With this sleight-of-hand assassination such powers now openly operate among us.

Why should I try to disguise the pessimism with which his death affects me, me personally? For many years, since we were both young, our names have, intermittently, been put together, his, as it should have been, foremost, for he goes before me in poems as he does in dying. We managed once to take each other's overcoats as we left a drinking party—and I knew whose coat I had got from the dog-eared Penguin I found in the pocket with a line of unmistakable poetry written on the back:

> "The lovers scorched to ashes on the green park grass."

As I see his death it would be a dishonouring of him if I were to try and write this note about him as though it would be quickly disremembered. For, although I am at a loss what to say, the poets of this time will feel at a greater loss how to be. He showed how to walk along the street with a poem as though it were a wife and not a whore for the night or a kept-man's angel. He had married the art of poetry not in a registry office or a library or a lecture room, but in a church. Heaven only knows what in the end they will say he died of—but one of the causes may have been the knowledge that he had done some of the things he set out to do. The poems as they are make up a complete and working body, a natural organism, a shape and pattern fulfilled and functioning, like a fly's eye or a stellar system, so that, retrospectively, one could believe that he had not died too soon. He only died too soon because a man like him would always die too soon. But we are not left with fragments of tremendous mementoes, like the poems of Keats—the truth is that, just as this fable evolved in front of our eyes the wings and fire that proved a whole new dragon of poetry had been born—just as soon as he had done this, he died.

But does one fly straight to the insurance office when one hears of such a death? I do not know why this particular death is, for me, more than the eclipse of a single life—perhaps because every poet is more people than he seems to be—but I do know that I feel as if a great principle were in graver danger of extinction now that he is dead. What this great principle may be, can only sense obscurely—I do not think that

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he himself would have claimed an over intelligible familiarity with it—but this principle has to do with the conservation of the spiritual privileges of all those things we do not know, and can never know.

He speaks of this most nearly in the little note prefixed to the Collected Poems. "Man was born to serve, reverence and praise God,"—this is the first sentence of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola. "I write for the love of man and to praise God"—this is one of the last sentences of Dylan Thomas's. And perhaps what I mean when I say that his death has darkened a great principle is that, from now on, the praise will be a lot thinner without that voice which has, at last, welshed on us.

DYLAN THOMAS MEMORIAL FUND

SIR,

The death of Dylan Thomas at the age of thirty-nine is an immeasurable loss to English letters. In memory of his poetic genius a fund has been started for the establishment of a Trust to assist his widow in the support and education of his three young children. This Trust will be administered in their interests by a committee which will include Messrs. Drummonds, Branch of the Royal Bank of Scotland. Subscriptions should be sent either to Messrs. Drummonds at 49 Charing Cross, London, S.W.1, or to A. G. Dennis, Esq., LL.M., Solicitor, 40 Berkeley Square, London, W.1. The latter will supply any information required either as to the means of payment or the nature of the Trust; it is hoped that subscribers, wherever possible, will enter into a deed of covenant to pay over a period of years, thereby securing for the beneficiaries a relief of income tax which would otherwise not be available. We earnestly hope that the response to this appeal will be both immediate and sustained.

T. S. ELIOT, PEGGY ASHCROFT, KENNETH CLARK, WALTER DE LA MARE, GRAHAM GREENE, AUGUSTUS JOHN, LOUIS MACNEICE, EDWIN MUIR, GORONWY REES, EDITH SITWELL, OSBERT SITWELL, VERNON WATKINS.

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Rita Hinden

The Case of British Guiana

BRITISH GUIANA is a small and not very important colony. Its population is only half a million; except for sugar and some bauxite, it has no great source of wealth; nor has it any particular strategic value. Yet when, in October, a Communist plot was alleged there, troops despatched and its six-month-old constitution suspended, the affairs of British Guiana suddenly gripped the attention of the world. Had the Colonial Office done the right thing? Should a democratically-elected government be overthrown from outside? These questions have provoked the deepest passions, for what is really involved here is not just the future of an unknown little territory, but the most serious of all problems troubling the free world today—its treatment of Communism. All the ideological conflicts that rack democrats when freedom is used to foster totalitarianism, seem to have crystallised themselves in this episode. British Guiana has become significant, not so much for itself, but because it is a microcosm of the world's malaise.

What are the facts of the British Guiana story? Since the war almost every British colony has moved towards self-government. This is the policy of both major political parties, and the Labour Government in its six years of office took its policy very seriously. Many British socialists had struggled for years for the rights of dependent peoples to self-determination—no matter what their colour or creed, no matter whether they were literate or illiterate. And this struggle succeeded so far that India, Pakistan, Ceylon, and Burma have achieved complete independence or Dominion status (which is the same thing, except that the independent nation chooses to remain within the British Commonwealth); the Gold Coast has arrived on the threshold of independence; Nigeria is only a few steps behind; and the West Indian Colonies neighbouring on British Guiana have, one after the other, gained full adult suffrage and the beginnings of a Cabinet system. Indeed, all the ten or so Caribbean colonies were more or less promised Dominion status if only they would combine in a federation which would make of them a viable unit.

Only British Guiana lagged behind. This was partly because of internal fears and squabbles which were in some measure tied up with the division of the population into two almost equal racial groups—those of African and those of Indian descent. But the people of British Guiana were no less educated, no less insistent on their rights to self-government than were any other, and something had to be done about it. So in 1950 the Labour Government decided to send out a Commission of three to advise on the next steps.

I was asked to be a member of that Commission, and there was never any doubt in my mind—or in the minds of my colleagues, although their political views differed from mine—that British Guiana should have universal adult suffrage: it should have an all-elected legislature and an executive with an elected majority. The only difference between us—and that was made clear in our report—was on the constitutional checks that should be inserted. We were all agreed on the need for the Governor's reserve powers, but two of us wanted the further constitutional check to be in the form of a second chamber with much the same powers as the British House of Lords, while our colleague preferred that there should be a single chamber with a block of government nominees in it to hold the balance. In the event, the first proposal was accepted, and indeed, as things turned out, it would have

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made no difference if the Colonial Office had plumped for the second.

Our agreement was so complete about the desirability—in fact, the inevitability—of this advance which would bring British Guiana well into line with the political status of Jamaica, Trinidad, and Barbados, that our task should have been plain sailing. But there was a fly in the ointment—we were perfectly aware of the growing power of the People's Progressive Party with its Communist leadership. They were young, energetic, capable organisers; they knew all the answers. There was no coherent opposition, and it was more than likely that they would win in any popular election. That their idea of democracy was not ours was made only too plain.

THIS disturbing fact emerged with painful clarity when they gave evidence before us. The constitution they wanted was a single-chamber government, fully elected, with the vote given to everyone from the age of eighteen, with the Governor's powers barely tolerated, and with no other constitutional checks whatsoever. In a dramatic public session before a crowded audience, the Commission debated the meaning of democracy with the P.P.P. leaders. We talked of democracy as government by consent, by the consent even of the opposition. We talked of the need for constitutional checks—recognised by almost every democratic government in the world—in order to protect the rights of minorities and the freedom of individuals, and to allow an opposition to operate. They could see no point in all this. If a party wins a majority of the seats, they asserted, it has the right in the name of the people to do just what it thinks fit. "The voice of the people is the voice of God," we were told, and when we protested, showing how the voice of the people might change from one election to another, even that a party may win a majority of seats without a majority of votes, they were deaf to our arguments. "Do you want to put a check on God?" someone shouted at us.

Here, then, was our dilemma. Should we, in the fear of what one political group might do, withhold self-government from the people? In the end, we knew this would be impossible. What better ammunition could be given to Dr. Jagan and his friends? One of the most conclusive answers to Communism in colonial territories—as we knew from experience—was the grant of self-government and the transfer of responsibility to local leaders. That is what has happened in the Gold Coast, where Dr. Nkrumah, the present Prime Minister, was once a Communist. In India, Nehru is now keeping his own Communists in check in a way that the British administration could never have done. No, we felt sure, one must go ahead and trust that the exercise of responsibility and the force of commonsense would win the day. If we lacked that faith, then the whole movement towards colonial self-government could never have begun.

So, with the backing of the Colonial Office and the blessing of Oliver Lyttelton, who became the Colonial Secretary just about that time, our proposals went forward, and all our worst fears came true. British Guiana got its new constitution; it had its first general election early in 1953; the P.P.P. won 18 out of 24 seats on the Legislature (though only 51 per cent of the votes) and so had 6 out of 10 seats on the Executive. Dr. Jagan formed his cabinet of P.P.P. ministers. Having done so, he proceeded to act just as we could have foretold.

That story has been summarised in a White Paper which charged the P.P.P. ministers of having tried to subvert the police and the civil service, of having tried to manipulate the processes of law so as to gain control over trade unions by political means after industrial action had failed; of trying to gain political control over the educational system and the youth movements; of having neglected the ordinary work of administration in order to carry on political agitation; of having created a post-office savings scare and frightened off foreign investors to the point of threatening an economic crisis; and so on. There were reports of political demonstrations at which photographs of Stalin, Malenkov, and Mao-tse-tung were carried on high, and placards saying, "Down with the Churches." The Union Jack had been hauled down ceremonially on more than one occasion and the Red

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Flag unfurled in its place. Leading P.P.P. members were travelling backwards and forwards behind the Iron Curtain, and the country was being flooded with Communist literature.

In the circumstances, the Governor felt it impossible to continue. His reserve powers, he claimed, were never designed to meet a situation like that. He called for the support of troops and the constitution was suspended. It was announced simultaneously that a new commission would be sent out to make further proposals.

WHETHER it was wise to suspend the constitution in that way, whether there was something less drastic that might have been done, are the sort of questions that can be mulled over until the cows come home. Both political parties agreed that the P.P.P. had to be stopped, so that the Parliamentary debate in Britain concentrated on just these technical points. Could the Governor have used his reserve powers instead? There was no clear conclusion. Certainly the suspension of the constitution is so drastic a move that the next steps in British Guiana are already bedevilled, and the new Commission will have a tough task. But all this argument is ultimately a matter of tactics. There are two much deeper questions at the core of this sad little history. The first is: Should the P.P.P. government, which was, after all, democratically elected, have been interfered with? Or, putting it less extremely, should it not have been allowed to run its course until it had committed some much more flagrant offence? And the second question is: Why did a Communist group win such support in British Guiana?

There are many who argue that if Communists are elected democratically, or if they have the obvious support of the majority of the people, no one should intervene from outside. It may be unfortunate but that, presumably, is what the people want. Just as we must now recognise the Communist Government of China, and have recognised the Soviet Government of Russia, so we must recognise a Communist Government of British Guiana, irrespective of its actions. That is, after all, what is meant by self-determination; if not, all the talk of self-government in colonies is a sham. This is a simple, straightforward view which many democrats favour; and if they are strong anti-imperialists, they favour it even more hotly in a case like this.

The answer to this is by no means simple and straightforward. First, a colony is not yet a self-governing territory; certain final controls have been left with the British Parliament and the Governor, and so—in contrast with a sovereign independent nation, or with a Dominion—Britain not only has a right, but a responsibility, to intervene when things go wrong. It was for this very purpose that she retained the ultimate sanctions. Once a colony has reached independence, it may—like South Africa today—act in a way abhorrent to the British tradition, but then it is too late to intervene. If British democratic values are to be maintained in the Commonwealth, Parliament must protect them from attack—whether from the Left or the Right—while it still has the power.

Secondly, when an advanced constitution is granted to a colony, there are certain unspoken assumptions. It is assumed that the extension of democratic rights will be accompanied by an acceptance of democratic values; it is certainly not assumed that these rights will be used as a stepping-stone to totalitarianism. For the British people, who claim self-government for colonies, do so with the faith that the great new opportunities they offer to colonial peoples will be used with respect for their own minorities, and for all the freedoms of speech and association and conscience which they themselves hold so dear that they wish all to partake of them. And, just as they fight for these values at home, so they must continue to fight for them in the colonies while they are still colonies; for the ultimate aim of British colonial policy is not just self-government, but *democratic* self-government.

There is yet a third prong to the argument. The British Commonwealth is a free association of nations all of whom share the same fundamental values; the colonies are now advancing to equal partnership in this association. The only links holding the Commonwealth together

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are these intangible ones—which Edmund Burke long ago described as "light as air but strong as iron." There is no place, then, in this framework for nations which hold opposing values. Already the behaviour of South Africa, with its crude racialism, is a disruptive force, poisoning the relationship between the white and coloured peoples under the Crown. This is bad enough, but a Communist member, whose real loyalty was to Russia, would make it impossible to share defence secrets, to uphold a common citizenship with all its privileges, to maintain the significance of the Crown (the P.P.P. had already refused to send representatives to welcome the Queen on her visit to the West Indies), to carry on the frank and informal discussions which mark the Commonwealth arrangements. It would be inassimilable, and provoke tensions which would threaten to destroy the whole structure.

But these thoughts are not found convincing by everyone. After all, it is argued, British Guiana was not Communist *yet*. Nothing so terrible had yet been done. The P.P.P. was behaving badly, but we cannot ask from newcomers to political responsibility the sophisticated behaviour that we ask of ourselves. Many colonial politicians have blotted their copy-books on British standards, and we have not interfered with them. There is no real proof that they would have gone so far as to institute a totalitarian régime.

The answer to this can only be in terms of one's personal assessment of Communism. Were the P.P.P. just irresponsible neophytes to be treated with tolerance? Were their international Communist affiliations mere frivolous by-play, not to be taken too seriously?

MY OWN belief is that Communism—except perhaps among the very young—is never like that. It has its unshakable beliefs held with fanatical passion; it has its clearly laid plans; it knows exactly where it intends to go. It builds its success on the good-natured tolerance of democrats, and particularly of socialists, whom it then turns round and destroys. This process has already been lived through, time and again, in our generation. I am not suggesting that tolerance should therefore be forgone and every Communist suppressed—for such action breeds other evils. But when a Communist party is already in the saddle, to take no action before the horse goes galloping off is as culpable as if a doctor diagnosed cancer but said to himself, "I won't do anything yet. The patient is not really feeling bad; he has no pain. Perhaps the disease will not spread." But cancer always does spread, and the only hope is to act in time. It is no different with Communism, or with Fascism or racialism or any virulent disease of the body politic. Unless one shuts one's eyes to the whole history and ideology of the Communist movement, one cannot treat its activities as one would the peccadilloes of other not too scrupulous and perhaps immature politicians. It is in quite a different category.

But then, always, comes the final argument —the people *elected* them. Yes, but what did they elect them for? In British Guiana the P.P.P. went to the polls with beautiful promises of higher wages, better houses, better education, better everything for everyone. There was no word of Communism or any of the other things they later tried to do. The people were politically innocent; the majority voted for the first time in their lives. They certainly did not knowingly vote for Communism, and it is a travesty of democracy to suggest that this one slender verdict of theirs should settle their final fate.

But why did a Communist party establish itself so successfully in British Guiana as to be able to impress the electorate? Here we face the long unhappy past with its bitter legacy, combined with the real weaknesses and contradictions of British colonial administration. Most of the people of British Guiana are descended either from Negro slaves brought from Africa centuries ago to work on the sugar plantations, or from Indian indentured labourers shipped over to replace the slaves when they were freed. These people were foully treated and a heritage of anger and hatred against the white man persists to this day. What is more, they are rootless and traditionless. Unlike the peoples of Africa who have their chiefs and their tribal institutions, their customs, their languages, their clan life,

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the West Indians have nothing except a poor imitation of Europe. British Guiana has not even had economic prospects to offer them. It is a singularly difficult terrain. All the population is crowded into a narrow coastal belt, lying below sea-level and intersected by mighty rivers which form into swamps before reaching the sea. The only good crops that grow are sugar—and the freed Africans dislike returning to the estates—and some rice. A few find work in the uncongenial surroundings of the bauxite mines. So the standard of living has remained low, housing conditions are appalling, and discontent has been fed by the glaring contrasts between this poverty and the wealth respresented by a few rich sugar-owners and traders who live in their magnificent homes amid the general squalor.

What does British colonial administration do in this inflammatory situation? It does not —perhaps it cannot—spend the hundreds of millions of pounds which are needed to irrigate the coastal lands, harness the rivers, open up the interior, build roads, establish new crops, and offer new economic hope to the people. It is not malicious and oppressive—far from it; but it just neglects to do anything which could make a real impact. At the same time, in keeping with the liberal spirit of recent years, it encourages trade unions and co-operatives and local government and education. Indeed it goes so far as to offer scholarships to overseas universities for some of the brightest lads (now among the P.P.P. ministers) who return home simmering with new and explosive ideas. All this general education in "citizenship" is not only not matched by economic advance, it is also not matched by political advance. British Guiana, as I have said, lagged behind the others, and was still in 1950 being governed by colonial officials and their nominees in the Legislature.

What more natural than that this patchwork of circumstance should give its chance to any group which was violently anti-imperialist, violently anti-capitalist, insidiously anti-white; which offered everyone the moon without too much hard work? There were no strong loyalties, except only to the churches, to be broken down. There was no coherence in the society which could stiffen into resistance. And for the coterie that gathered round the leadership, here was a new philosophy which explained away all their troubles and opened the doors to paradise—and to power.

WHAT, then, does one conclude? Is it that there should not be adult suffrage and responsible government until all the economic and social conditions predispose to it? My conclusion is just the opposite. The trouble in British Guiana was not that self-government came too soon, but that it came too late. It came *after* the social reforms, *after* the founding of trade unions with their new ferment, *after* the spread of education. Either one holds back everything—which is no longer possible in a British colony—or one holds back nothing. It was just because new ideas and new institutions were encouraged, but economic advance was halting and self-government always hidden round the corner, that Communism had its chance. It was given the perfect conditions under which to operate.

I remain, then, an unrepentant believer in colonial self-government. It is the only ultimate answer. But timing is the essence of the matter. If self-government is delayed too long, it will turn sour when it comes. And then we face the tragic choice between undoing our own actions—as now in British Guiana—or allowing the new state we have ourselves created to run to ruin in the pursuit of false gods.

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Wyndham Lewis

Doppelgänger

"IT IS a capital debunking. In your best vein," said the Editor, a young man, all deep-pink skull and twinkling eyes, an Oxford accent fruity and faultless in the midst of the pink expanse; a Scottish pink only acquired after generations of exposure to the keen moisture of the Highlands and Islands. His tweeds were so expensive as to belong rather with the Oxford accent than with the Gaelic pink. "I did not know he was so *perfect* a phoney."

"A phoney?" I echoed. "Has my Trunk the look of a trunk with a false bottom?"

"Not that," he answered, "it looks as if the entire trunk was false. He has a great reputation, but why I can never understand. Trunk is a disagreeable smart-alec."

"He thoroughly deserves his great reputation *and* is a smart-alec." I paused a moment, to give him time to admire the paradox. "That, of course, is the difficulty. My story is about that conjunction."

"Ah no, sir, I cannot allow you to separate those two things in that manner. It is the *smartness* which is responsible for the reputation." The smiling composure of this undergraduate-debater warned me not to continue. He would expect me to admire *his* smartness. "Or perhaps that is what you meant. You meant that he has a great reputation *and* is very smart—that follows. The *difficulty* is that this should so often be the case."

I laughed politely. "No, they are quite distinct," I insisted. "What is extraordinary is that so often a great reputation (very well merited) should be associated with something ridiculous and contemptible."

"How do you mean?' he said cautiously.

"Well, to begin with, is it not amazing how foolish almost any man may be made to look, in historical perspective, as Lytton Strachey proved in his *Eminent Victorians*?"

"But did Strachey prove it?" aggressively pounced the Editor. "We recognise now that Strachey is historically good fun, but nothing more."

"It is not every *we* who recognises that," I told him. "Strachey, without being conscious of it, was innovating. He thought he was guying the beliefs of the Victorian age, but his techniques were less exclusive than that. Take, for instance, General Gordon, the hero of Khartoum. His Bible Religion was fertile in satiric material. His utterances were so nonsensical, in the days before his death, that gales of laughter may be made to blow eternally around his name. But the tender passion is another source of uproarious amusement: and Gordon might have been made to oblige in that direction as well. He was a homosexual, we now know. Could Strachey have discovered a snapshot of Gordon in a playful moment with a negro boy that also might have been found distinctly comic. I remember how a certain novelist of my acquaintance had gone to visit Strachey in the country. Our satirist was seated on the lawn, surrounded by large books. But they had apparently remained unread because some undergraduates from the neighbouring University had put in an appearance. The hysterical shrieks of laughter of the Old Maid, not less funny because of the long and postiche-looking beard, the come-away-nearer girlish gesticulations of this extremely tall perverse amorist, were reported disgustedly by the visiting novelist—who seemed to think that a man of Strachey's intelligence should not publicly indulge in the tender passion, whether perverse or otherwise.

"Then liberalism would, I feel quite sure,

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provide for a Strachey of the future quite as much entertainment as Victorians ever did. The follies of the Victorians derive mainly from misunderstood religion: the follies of libertarianism, in the 20th century, derive chiefly from sentimental politics—in their turn deriving from sentimentalised religion."

The Editor had been attempting, all the way along, to plunge in with some debating point, and hold up what I had to say. During my references to sexual perversion I experienced the utmost difficulty in restraining him from gleefully intruding. Now he was feeling that he had lost all his opportunities; nevertheless, as I firmly drew to a close, and sat back in my chair, he lost no time in taking my place.

He was twinkling at me in a superior way when he began, "I notice, sir, that you regard sexual perversity as *funny*."

But I broke in at once. "The transports of the pervert, as those of normal lovers, are ridiculous—neither *more* nor *less*, ridiculous because (must I say?) the reproductive act, the swallowing and evacuating processes (self-preservation) are degrading, we look fools when we are at it."

"Oh, this is a hypothesis," he clamoured.

"If you like," I said. "But let us avoid anything that could be described as hypothesis, and climb towards truth, in another way."

"I am ready to climb with you anywhere you like—I am awfully fond of climbing." (I could see that he was increasingly annoyed at my giving him so little opportunity to express himself.) "But I must first ask you to clear up for me a statement you made——"

I held up my hand. "Let us return to that when we have finished climbing. You wished to dispute the humorousness of the indecorous—that man at his most functional is man as he would not wish to be seen. All this talk of ours is about a public man, is it not? Well, when a man or woman becomes very prominent, he or she is transformed into a kind of public statue, in a certain sense and to some degree."

"Oh I say," the Editor burst out.

"When, sir, just now you spoke of debunking, did you mean simply a taking off the pedestal, so to speak; or—to speak symbolically, as I have been doing—to reduce poor old Trunk from the Greek statue that he has become, back into flesh and blood again?"

"I really don't know what you are talking about, sir," said the Editor angrily.

"Let me explain a little, then. This is what I mean by the Greek statue aspect of a great man."

"There is no such aspect," objected the Editor. "An Eminent Victorian may have enjoyed such a deification in his lifetime; but the eminent of today are content to be men and women."

"It is not the eminent," I objected, "but it is the Public who do the deifying. However much a 'great' this or 'great' that may resist deification, the superstition of the majority operates as it did in the days of the 'Victorian Giants'."

"To some extent," the Editor began.

'Well, let us accept the fact that the average of mankind looks upon the famous, especially if they are highbrow or intellectual, as dehumanised as a statue on a pedestal in a public park. They still can be startled by any biographer who tells them how a novelist, like Dickens, was attracted by an actress, just as ordinary men are."

"But what are we talking about?" said the Editor irritably.

"I can see that you had something more in mind by *debunk* than merely denying poor old Thaddeus Trunk a place in a public park or even a *plaque* after death." I stood up. "You meant that Trunk tries to occupy his monument. If all he did was to work upon his *legend*, to improve his publicity face, to write his *own* obituary notice more and more heroically, that would be tiresome, but it would not matter quite so much as what he actually does. He wishes to *live* his publicity figure. There it is inside his house—in his bedroom, in his bed, a publicity-figure, not a real man. So when is he ever the poet? He should drive out this publicity interloper and if he does not, someone else should. No poet as fine as he is should maintain so compromising a parasite. For a man's publicity is a caricature of himself; it is really how the public sees 'greatness'. Now it was this heroic publicity scarecrow which you had in mind when you spoke of *debunking*, was it not?"

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The Editor had risen too, smiling broadly. He did not speak until I had concluded. Then he said, "You know what I meant so well that I will leave the whole question in your hands and say no more about it. However, it *is*, my dear chap, a tremendous *debunk*, and I congratulate you."

I took possession of my manuscript, which he was tapping forcibly with the tips of his fingers where it lay upon his desk. "There is something I should add to this," I observed. "You shall have it back in a day or two."

As I was walking away from the Editor's little office, I was saying to myself that I did not know whether my story could be thought of in the way indicated during my talk with the Editor, for it describes something which actually occurred.

When I got home I typed at the end of the story I had taken away with me the following addendum:

"The shallow or the inexperienced might absolutely misunderstand this story. Let me add, therefore, that Trunk is a very majestic Word-Man, a great poet, he has been a verbal craftsman of the highest order, he may be compared to Catullus (allowing for the different time and place). He must be saluted as though he were a great interpretative musician, a pianist of enormous resource. And he is a man who has so perfect a devotion to literature, that you will never hear from him a valuation which is tainted with the personal. His creative work, and how superb it is I do not have to say, benefits by the same natural detachment. Any mistakes of judgement he may have made derive merely from the occasional frailty of his reason."

THE STORY

THADDEUS TRUNK, known to his friends as Uncle Thad, is passing into the seventies, without any particular change from his grizzly entrance into the sixties. As to Uncle Thad: he has always (defensively, I think) presented himself as an Uncle. He would say, humorously, "Your old Uncle Thad sez" this or that: or "Your old Papa Thad." He had always the itch to offer advice, to tell others what to do with their lives, to teach them how to Write, to teach them how to Read. He realised that this could not be done, unless it were done comically. And so, puffing a little through his moustache, and frowning portentously, he would say, "Listen to what your old bourgeois Papa tells yew!" or something of that kind. With a lot of cracks and quips, and mouthings and rumblings (about "Yew young avant-guardistas") and so forth, he would deliver what he wished to deliver. He would be the pedagogue or the soothsayer. Even at thirty years old, dear old Uncle Thad was paternal or avuncular. As a fact, some of his contemporaries were much more *avant-garde* than he was, since he was in love with the Past, being an American and so in any case he would be inclined to apologise for himself as a laggard in the March of Progress, and a snuffly old *passéiste* digging about among musty old manuscripts.

For ten years now he has lived in a high valley of the mountains of Vermont, U.S. For ten years he has been dying. Fur-capped, with leather leggings, and inflated to an impressive bulk in a short overcoat, lamb-skin-lined, collared and lapelled with cloth as stiff and thick as the bark of a plane tree, photographs of him sitting and milking his favourite goat Gianetta, spitting blood of course (glaring down toughly at the sight of the manly colour of his bloodstream), though it is asserted by those who have stopped up at the Camp Trunk with the Master that he has not had a hæmorrhage for years—these photographs circulate in literary circles, from Montparnasse to Mexico City. And his reputation grows year by year, as he dies and dies, and spits and spits. He is photographed among icy peaks, alpenstock in hand, the white beard frostily bristling, as high above other men as it is romantically possible to get in the U.S.: that is the star photograph.

Stella, his wife, is an Englishwoman, possessed of considerable wealth. As he has no money himself, this was for him a fortunate circumstance. The Camp Trunk used to be the

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Camp Baxter. Baxter was a tycoon who built and planned this property for himself but did not enjoy its amenities for more than a half-dozen years, when his firm became bankrupt. The Trunks, though it was rather larger than they actually needed, secured it for a relatively modest sum.

It is a sprawling, flat, wooden palace, with log walls of a dark brown, so that it has the effect of a dozen log-cabins welded together. As it is only of one storey, and as some of the rooms are very spacious, it spreads out over a considerable area. From the door leading down into the furnace-room at the rear of the house, to the extremity of the dining-room protruding at the front, it must measure over a hundred yards. A natural waterfall a short distance away provides the electricity required; a brick house by the side of the fall contains the plant. In the rear of the main building is a square courtyard, paved with bricks; beyond it stands the garage, a large incinerator, for rubbish, and a short distance away what Uncle Thad refers to as "Mr. Hazeldon's harem." That is the engineer, who lives in a spacious wooden building with his wife and sister. But once as many as three sisters of his wife were to be found there, girls in their late teens or early twenties. This seemed to Uncle Thad an unnecessary number of young women to be domiciled under one roof with one man.

Would Trunk die if he stepped down off this lofty mountain site? Probably. But meanwhile, according to report, he is in the best of health. The Camp Trunk provided a cheap holiday for a number of people (for all that is over now, and the past tense must be used about many of these details, where one is speaking of the inmates). Trunk himself preferred to invite *les jeunes*—"discipular" youths (a favourite adjective of his), usually from one of the colleges, and usually versifying. The dogs barked, the horses neighed, the cocks crowed stridently, when the station-wagon arrived in the thrilling air, catching the breath of *les jeunes* as they jumped from the door, with sparkling eyes receiving the tough, half-jeering welcome of their Uncle Thad, their luggage seized by their brother-in-verse, the rawboned if sweet-tongued Cobe, the house-boy. Should they arrive in a blizzard, it was Cobe's task to keep open a path for them between the station-wagon and the door of the kitchen.

Coburn, known as Cobe, is a young poet who imitates the Master's verses with great skill: though if Trunk's are often empty enough of meaning, Cobe's are often completely devoid of sense. When the elements are particularly beastly, the sight of Cobe, a gaunt snowman, whirling his shovel as if to cut paths through the air, is very impressive; and the monstrous figure of the befurred and bewhiskered invalid, looking immensely tough, as though he were charging through a storm of steel instead of merely whizzing snowflakes the size of a gooseberry, advances menacingly towards them, a figure of myth. In fact, an arrival in winter, the dying poet battling with the elements, was apt to be a "great experience" for the more impressionable. It bore out the most tragic accounts of the life of the "Great Invalid." If it is below zero the visitor is hurried into the kitchen where Cobe's wife and several other domestics pluck their coats from their shoulders and wipe the snow off their clothes. Then they traverse the middle regions of the house, and emerge in the very large living-room, looking on to an ice-caked lake. The house temperature is kept at eighty degrees. As they are taken to their rooms, they may pass Trunk's study, from which forever is heard the rattling of a most dynamic typewriter. It is dynamic because, all day long, it is attacked by a muscular young woman. For hours Trunk is dictating; he strides up and down, his heavy load of grey hair avalanching down upon his frowning forehead, tossed back, massive and leonine; as he shouts and spits his dictation, the eyes are long black slits behind their glasses, and the jaw muscles are always mobilised near the ear. He is a near-six-footer, and he feels the very picture of a "fighter," as he attempts to "tower above" the half-dead woman, endlessly hitting the keys, as he strikes out in words at a hundred institutions and a thousand "ticks" infesting the underworld of Letters.

The postman who, everyday about noon, empties the U.S. mail from the box nailed to a tree, seldom bears away fewer than seventy or eighty letters or cards. What this mountain

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postman collects from Camp Trunk are notes to young poets in Pakistan, Bolivia, the Gold Coast, Malaya, New York, Teheran, San Francisco, Wigan, Guatemala, Borneo, Wyoming, Winnipeg, and anywhere else in the world where a little verse is written and the Venerable Trunk, milking his goat, and spitting blood, has caught the eye of the little verse-maker. The moment he sees a verse, in no matter what language (which he can understand or not), Trunk writes an encouraging note. They are sometimes incomprehensible, they usually splutter with expletives against the blockheads who mistaught the budding song-bird, or the general conspiracy to put a stop to Song. When the little song-bird's notes are choked with catarrh, or croak like those of a scabby little crow, the good Uncle Thad will observe that his correspondent should rest up a little, or try and shake the grit out of his iambics.

Was not this a little maniacal? For had not Trunk advertised his contempt for the Majority in all its forms, had he not sneered at those who would waste their time in blowing upon a tiny little spark glimmering in the recesses of Mediocrity? The horde of warblers he woos and wows must poison him with their dullness, and he must know that this is happening, and yet one side of his study is a mass of letters from all quarters of the globe. What idiot conceit causes him to play the Dispenser of Culture to what he regards as benighted Mankind?

Here we have a habit, like the extraordinary grimaces some men affect, until, two-thirds of the way through life, the face integrally includes the grimace. Or one may think of it as a nervous tic. Such a publicity complaint could exist nowhere except in the United States. And if you allow Publicity to master you in this way, it becomes a whole-time job, and at last you live for Publicity.

It is in solitude, it should be recalled, that major works of creative art are produced. Trunk lives in the solitude of high mountains. How appropriate, people thought; that is the place for the true creator. But the fact was that he lived up to his neck in human society. He was almost submerged, spiritually, by a horde of anonymous beings. Yes, through his childish mania for publicity, poor Trunk brought a multitude up into the mountains, polluting the air; and he may be regarded as a victim of the Public. Those who, like myself, know what he can do away from men, where he can be a great poet, and hold up his head among the Gods, have lamented at what we saw.

ONE day in September of last year the Trunk station-wagon met the New York train. The chauffeur had been asked to identify a small red-faced young man, with a large pipe, which he did. As the identification was in progress, the chauffeur found that a tall man was standing there, apparently waiting to address him. In answer to an enquiring glance the tall man explained that he was a near relative of Mr. Trunk's, and had come to see him. So, when the station-wagon arrived at the camp, two people stepped out instead of one.

Uncle Thad arrived almost immediately, greeting the little fat nobody with a tough growl of welcome, handing to Cobe, who had followed him, a battered little grip and the little Minstrel's overcoat. Then he turned to the stranger.

"My name is—oh the same as that of your mother. I come from the town in which you were born. We are fairly closely related; that is not my only excuse for turning up here, but . . ."

The stranger was well dressed, his blue eyes sure, smiling and frank, his luggage inspired confidence, and whether for these reasons or one less easily explained, Trunk narrowed his eyes to welcoming slits, thrust out his hand in good western fashion, and said, "Cousin, come right in. Glad to see anyone from the old nest, spesh'lly a rel'tive. Here, let me give your suitcase to the house-boy."

He took the handsome case and handed it to Cobe. "Put this in room nine."

Thus simply, and without more ado, the stranger became a guest. That was almost the last time that Trunk and the Stranger spoke to one another without friction. Trunk led the way through the labyrinth of the house until they reached the living-room, where Stella was sitting before a large tray and pouring tea. Trunk dropped himself in a low chair—he

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always dropped himself like an inanimate object, he never *sat*. He then rolled his head in the direction of the Stranger, who had sat down and was lighting a cigarette. "Meet Cousin . . . d'know his name. Comes from the capital village of Slabash County. He doan look so benighted as he oughter look. But I gave him a bed, and we shall see."

Mrs. Stella Trunk nodded a smile of bright intelligence at the tall Stranger, whose appearance she liked at once. His grey hair was thick, but brushed over stiffly to the left. His features were handsome, and from the grey-blue eyes to the jutting chin there was, she thought, a strong family resemblance to Thaddeus . . . though he was clean as a new pin, and nicely dressed, and put his cousin to shame. However, it did enable her to see how Thad, if he shaved and brushed himself up, might be quite a presentable man after all.

Counting the new arrival with the red face, there were now five young men, all visiting poets. Sitting beyond the Mystery Man, who separated them from Trunk, for a short while they sat and looked at him, this cousin of Uncle Thad's. Then the red-face and the pipe made acquaintance with the other poets, and soon a brisk talk about a new book on Rilke was in progress, and this was followed by one of the young men moving quickly to the Columbia radiogram, and inserting a record of a Marienlied by a young American composer.

Stella had given the Stranger his cup of tea and conversation between them had ensued, on Stella's side enthusiasm regarding the beauty of Slabash County, on the Stranger's qualified agreement, and (with a shy smile) something to the effect that he much preferred Wiltshire. This aroused the rugged nationalism of Trunk, who was at once at his most belligerent. He began showing off for the benefit of his young guests.

"You should be ashamed of yourself, Cousin, preferring a pitcher-postcard of Ye Olde Thatched Cottage to the grand places we get born in over here, and should know better than to prefer the picayune. . . ."

"I am sorry, Mr. Trunk," the Stranger energetically interposed. "I have no jingo reputation to keep up, so I can say what I think of Slabash County, and I prefer the English downs to the tick-infested bush clothing the jagged hills of my native valleys."

Stella laughed pleasantly. "Bravo!" she said brightly. "Thaddeus has all the nationalism that it would be bearable for one family to contain. Personally, a down bores me to tears. I think there is nothing in England that is a patch on the valley of the Hudson River."

There was loud applause from the chorus of young poets.

The Stranger's retort changed Trunk's neutrality to a watchful hostility. He did not answer the jingo taunt: he sat with a deeply abstracted air, showing that he was no longer interested in what the Stranger might say. When, however, this disturber of the peace joined in the conversation of the young poets, and expressed opinions with regard to the *literary* character of the poetry of Rilke, Trunk pricked his ears up, slowly turned his head, and stared at this bold guest. It was time that this person was stamped out, and he began discharging sarcasms at anything he said, turning towards *les jeunes* to mobilise them against this cousin—if it was a cousin.

"If you *must* inspire yourself from the pages of *Poetry for Everyman*, Mister Whateveritis, you might try to understand what is being written."

Poetry for Everyman was one of the popularising handbooks written by Trunk fairly recently.

With a taunting smile the Stranger said, "Do you think that *you* understand it?"

There was a buzz of excited resentment at this from *les jeunes*, who all looked at the Master, expecting a pulverising retort. But all he did was slowly to turn his head once more, and to gaze curiously at his relative. One of the young men then took up the argument with the Stranger in support of Trunk's interpretation of his own book; but without hesitation the Stranger put him right, going into technical details which very soon silenced the young man, but, curiously enough, drew no correcting broadside from Trunk. The red-faced and pipe-smoking newcomer had something to say: but with a few observations from the Stranger, showing a thorough mastery of the

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subject, the conversation was allowed to languish.

Thaddeus Trunk knew that there was some mystery about this man who had come uninvited, and who immediately gave evidence of anything but respect for his great reputation. He decided to make no attempt to penetrate this mystery, but to wait for the Stranger to declare himself, in his own good time. It would not be long, he felt sure, before the cat was out of the bag. At dinner that night Stella, whose interest in the Stranger seemed continually to increase, placed him at her right, and talked almost exclusively with him. Only trivial matters were discussed, such as the hotel accommodation in Slabash County, and how amazing it was to an Englishwoman to find the immense distances people would travel—and after all Washington was five hundred miles away, wasn't it?—to spend a week or so with a friend. He, for instance, had he come two or three thousand miles to visit his relative, as she daresaid he had . . .? Oh no, was his answer to that; he came from one of the great Eastern universities, that was all. They were sort of neighbours, really—Ah, that was *very* nice, and she did hope that he would make a habit of coming up there when he could spare the time (for she assumed, as he had come right now from that university, that he taught there).

The Stranger took part in the general conversation too. By the time he had drawn on the table-cloth a number of Chinese characters, had quoted intact a number of poems by Catullus, Ovid, etc., had corrected the Greek of one of the older young men, and had settled an argument about the pronunciation of Persian, it became obvious to everybody that this must be a high-ranking professor whom it was necessary to treat rather carefully, and to speak rather carefully oneself. This cast a certain restraint over the party, seeing that Uncle Thad would never take very seriously any young poet who did not know a little Arabic, Tamil, Phoenician, and Early German, and could not join in any Greek or Latin expedition which Uncle Thad thought it was safe to make.

The next morning, after breakfast, Trunk noted that his wife and the Stranger disappeared in the direction of the waterfall; and it was more than three hours later that he suddenly found them entering the kitchen door, poor Stella looking a little fatigued, but the Stranger being as quietly brisk as ever. There was no question of this visitor vacating Room 9, for Stella said to him: "Our visitor will stop in Room 9 for about a week; I got him to promise that he would not dash away at once, as almost any interesting person is apt to do. Don't you like him, Thad? He looks frightfully like you sometimes, it is clear enough that he is your cousin. Have you talked with him about——"

"My dear Stella, I *never* talk to people about things of that sort. When they want to, they talk to *me*. And *he* has said nothing so far."

"He will of course," Stella said.

That is where the matter ended. The Stranger never referred again to the fact of their consanguinity, and Trunk did not either.

Meanwhile, every morning, Stella and the Stranger would walk away in one direction or another, and not return until lunch-time. He would always say how superb the scenery was, which Stella had been so kind as to point out to him. In conversation in the evening he and Trunk were always clashing, or rather the host always disagreed with anything the guest said, and they would have longer or shorter arguments. The latter was never annoyed and never disconcerted. He did not say, "You always disagree with me." He appeared to take that for granted.

Something very unusual occurred on the fifth day after the arrival of Trunk's strange relative. A number of books were in a large bookcase in the living-room. Trunk wanted a *History of Ferrara*, which he had last seen there. As it was there no longer, he sought out Cobe, who seemed to remember having seen it in Room 9. It was as a consequence of this that Trunk burst into the Stranger's bedroom. As it was the morning, there was no one there, and the intruder planted himself in the middle of the room, and swept his eagle eye around it. It was then that he caught sight of a verse manuscript on the small table with which the room was provided. He walked slowly across and gazed down upon it with a thoughtful

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look; it was scrawled all over and the central core was almost lost in a cloud of balloons and deletions. He picked it up. He began reading, and at once realised that it was a poem he had started work on a few days earlier. As he read on he saw that the corrections were not his. It was his verse, but all the corrections were the Stranger's, in a handwriting slightly different from his own.

He stood gazing in amazement at the familiar words. Was this a case of a literary theft? If so, how the devil could the Stranger have secured entrance to his writing-room, which he very carefully kept locked, and no domestic had access to it.

There was a shadow across the page, and the Stranger was at his side.

"Ah, you are reading my manuscript," he said, and gently removed it from Trunk's hand. "I have not copied out my first draft," he explained.

"So I see," Trunk said. "Why did you change the word 'mud' and substitute the word 'grit'?"

"I see you have been examining my composition," the Stranger remarked.

"Yes," Trunk told him, "and I find that you are writing, word for word, what I am writing. You, however, are *improving* my composition."

For a moment the Stranger looked embarrassed.

"How extraordinary," he said at length. "It is yet another instance of my telepathic endowment. I began writing quickly, without thinking much what I was doing. *Then* I began correcting—like the schoolmaster I am." He paused. Then he added, "I must stop doing this."

"It would perhaps be better if you did." Trunk eyed him toughly for a moment or two, and was about to leave the room, when he turned at the door, and said "Are you reading a *History of Ferrara*, by any chance?"—"No, sir," he was told, and so took his departure.

Thaddeus Trunk was very much disturbed. He had a thrill of deep apprehension. In the end he decided that it was yet another instance of his amazing powers. This poor fellow was so overpowered by his personality that he had reached the point of telepathic imitation. Evidently he was very psychic.

In spite of his rationalisation of this very odd discovery, Trunk was now possessed of a constant uneasiness about this unwelcome guest. Once or twice that day he passed him in a corridor; they did not speak, and as he touched him in passing, realising that strange silent body so near to his, he experienced a spasm of a kind of eerie alarm. He thought how, in the past, when they had happened to come near to one another in this way, the Stranger had never spoken. The image which he had of him most clearly, if he had had to recall him, was one from the first day of his sojourn there. They were standing in the paved court at the back of the main building and suddenly the Stranger spat. Nothing odd in that, but he noticed that what he had spat had blood in it, and he had looked queerly at him as he asked, "Do you often do that?"—"Why no," the other man had answered. "Now and then I have noticed that my sputum has blood in it. A little blood, it is nothing."

Trunk was a few minutes late for tea that day, and arrived in the middle of a conversation between Stella and the Stranger, *les jeunes* listening in. Before he came in, his wife had laughingly referred to the "tough guy" ingredients in Thaddeus; for they had been discussing Hemingway, and she felt that it would have been affected to ignore the fact that there was another "tough guy" not so far away.

The Stranger had analysed this "toughness" in a very clear and sensible way, she thought. He said that since he had been born around the same time as Thaddeus, he thought he could understand the origin of this exaggerated masculinity. "You see, Thaddeus Trunk was born under the shadow of Theodore Roosevelt's 'Big Stick,' he grew up with the Bull Moose symbol under his eyes, the strenuous life ideal inspiring every Presidential utterance."

It was at this point that Trunk entered. The Stranger continued, "But quite apart from that, those were tough times, especially in the West. If you were riding in a lonely place and met another man, or men, you would do well to remember how lawless the nation was in

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which you dwelt, and give these strangers as hard a look as you could muster."

Trunk realised at once that all this had something to do with him. As he, as usual, dropped into the low easy chair he preferred, his accumulated resentment came to a head suddenly. He felt that he could and should fling this impudent so-called cousin out of the front door. He was a timid man, beneath his veneer of toughness, very averse to showdowns of any sort; but his chest rose as he turned towards the Stranger, and a growl came out of him which his wife had never heard before.

"You had better stop that, Stranger, you had really better not go on in that way. I do not like it. Remember it is the same nation now as it was then, and by hell I will throw you through that door if I hear any more stuff of that kind coming out of you."

There was a heavy silence, and Stella Trunk felt herself trembling a little. Stella was inclined to be "fey," as an Englishwoman is apt to be. When she was young she believed in Tinkabell, she was disposed to favour anything which was only half there, or which came down the chimney rather than in at the door. This Stranger had dropped out of the sky, he was a being she had not got to the bottom of, but she was greatly attracted by this cousin of Thaddeus. She felt the rage that was surging in her husband. At any moment, she knew, he might leap out of his chair, and there would be a battle. What should she do? She bit her lip and waited, her eye travelling from the rumbustious form of what she knew to be her gentle husband, and this composed but, she realised, more redoubtable figure at his side, almost touching him. Would the spring be released? At every quite harmless natural movement she felt there was about to be an eruption—that this was the first move and the next would be chaos.

But the Stranger spoke softly and soothingly. "I do assure you, Mr. Trunk, that no offence was intended, and I ask you to forgive me, if, by inadvertence, I have been stepping on your toes."

There was again a silence, uncomfortable, but Stella had the feeling that the storm raging inside her husband was abating. Then one of the young poets suddenly said: "Mr. Trunk, may I put on a record—the last Purcell fantasia, the one-note, you know. Mrs. Trunk looks very tired, sir, and I think she would like to hear that music."

"Okay, young man," Trunk gave vent to a critical puff. "If you think the Missus would like that barley water and saccharine."

And so the tension evaporated. But that evening at dinner, half-way through it, it was renewed. That meal was always prefaced by the drinking of Bourbon or gin. And during the meal a full-bodied Burgundy was warming the veins of the party.

As Thaddeus sat down he called to his wife, pointing at the Stranger, who, as usual, was occupying the place on her right-hand side. "Be careful of that guy," he warned as he pointed. "I overheard him conversing with someone who had a tail."

"How amusing," said his wife, with much warmth, "I must ask him about that."

Trunk sat at the end of the table opposite to that of his wife. The Stranger and Stella seemed on better terms than ever that evening; he was filling her glass from a bottle which stood between them; and then he filled his own. Then he would raise his glass and murmur something, and it all looked detestably friendly to the observant Thaddeus. Just as there are thunderstorms which disappear, to roll and flash elsewhere, so there are psychic disturbances experienced by men, which vanish and, after an interval more or less long, once more make their appearance. The sudden inflammatory condition earlier that day had left a great sore bed inside the abnormally provoked host. So it was that Stella shivered as she heard that voice again, which she had heard for the first time when her husband abruptly took fire when he came in at tea-time.

"Take your snout out of that wine-glass, you louse—yes, I mean *you*, Mr. Cousin of my arse! Also stop playing the sucking-dove with my wife, you worm-eaten old charmer! Yes, you, Mr. Cousin of that apology for a bitch slobbered over by my Aunt Jane."

Stella half rose. "Thad! If you don't stop I shall have to leave the table."

"That's okay with me, entirely okay with

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me. Take yourself off if you don't like my company."

"Mr. Trunk!" The Stranger was glaring at his host.

"What do you want, grease-spot—are you going too? If I don't spik handsome and affable to you? Waall if you *doant* take your suet-face out of my sight pretty soon I shall have to use my boot to you!"

"You old drooler," bellowed the Stranger, "if it weren't for Stella I would be shutting up that dirty old mouth of yours."

Trunk had become very pale, and his mouth was pulled down at the corners as the traditional warriors of Japan look in battle, but his underlip was trembling. Grasping the table in front of him with two hands, he spat hysterically any word that he could find.

"Thieving punk, have you stolen any more of my manuscripts? Why I ever brought a rat like you——"

The Stranger had sprung up. In a moment he had reached the bottom of the table and seized Trunk by the tie, and jerked him out of his chair. The young man sitting on the left of the host had risen and began springing about. He received a blow from Trunk, who was hitting out with aimless fury as he felt himself being prised into the air by his revolted guest. But the next minute the Stranger was battering at his face, and then delivering a haymaker, as the youthful audience later described it, in the centre of the bulging beard, which sent him reeling down upon the floor, where he lay at full length, completely still.

Gasping, Stella rose and ran to the side of the prostrate Thaddeus. The youngest of the poets was already kneeling at the other side of him. Everyone had risen. The Stranger strode very quickly out of the room, colliding with Cobe who was hurrying in, in response to a scream from his wife. She was waiting at table, and was now screaming hysterically.

HALF an hour later, the Stranger, fully dressed, and carrying his suitcase, walked out into the court. Stella, who was with him, went over to the chauffeur, on his knees beside a car, and asked him to get the station-wagon ready, as this guest wished to catch the night-train for New York. She then returned to where the Stranger was standing.

"He will not keep us long," she said. They began pacing up and down, the Stranger, in a low voice, explaining how greatly he had been provoked.

Before they left there was a scene. His face swollen, and striding a little less toughly than usual, Thaddeus came out of the house and walked slowly towards them, his hands in his jacket pockets. In one of these was a gun, which he had brought with him in case the Stranger should wish to repeat his knockout. Out of his tumefied face looked two very angry eyes.

"Stella, go back into the house."

"No." Stella shook her head.

"This guy beat me up. That's what I get for my hospitality. You reward him for beating me up by being his escort to the station."

The Stranger spoke. "Was I to remain passive, under your filthy abuse?"

Thaddeus went up to Stella, and thrust his hand under her arm. "That drip can go as he came. *Faccia di merda*—yes, you. . . ."

"Don't be absurd—at least say what you have to say in your own language."

Stella approved this retort of the Stranger's.

"Don't make a fool of yourself Thaddeus, I will remain with this guest of ours, who is leaving because you insulted him. I wish to make up to him for the bad treatment he has received."

"I insulted *that* . . .!"

"He might knock you down again!" Stella sneered. "You had better go in and have a rest."

At this Thaddeus turned on his heel, and feeling a little giddy, for he had been struck another blow, this time by Stella, went slowly into the house.

While this altercation had been proceeding the chauffeur had had time to get the station-wagon out; he was buttoning up his overcoat. Stella and the Stranger advanced towards him, he held open the car door, and Stella got in, followed by her protégé. So, a minute or two later the Rebellious Châtelaine and the Uninvited Guest rolled away. That was the last Thaddeus saw of his wife. Or, to state briefly what had happened, a second Thaddeus, whom

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Stella recognised as the real Thaddeus had made his appearance, and Stella, very simply, changed Thaddeuses, deserting, or, if you prefer it, leaving, Thaddeus Number One.

Only a shadow, a shell, remained upon the mountain. In the mountain mists a bulky phantom of publicity like one of those oversize garish posters which are so repulsively familiar continued to milk a goat there, and to spit imaginary blood. But, bit by bit, this advertisement figure evaporated, and there was nothing left at all of the one-time poet who had been devoured by that Moloch, the Public.

What else is there to say? The disembodied instrument will still produce annually, perhaps, a slender volume with verses of the same matchless beauty. But as the Public receives these final perfect messages it holds in its mind the heroic image of the dying poet: for it, old Thaddeus is still milking his goat in the high mountains, and as he does so, with the symbolic spitting, his lifeblood ebbs away. This image is as necessary to it as that of the beautiful ineffectual angel was to the contemporaries of Shelley; as dear as the sadly-gazing eyes of the bearded sage of Craigenputtock was to the generation which venerated Carlyle. There must be a visual human equivalent—if that were all, Thaddeus would be justified. What he did not realise was that the Public supplied its own publicity, and that he must only live, in flawless innocence. It was but a minimal fragment of that Public which was his affair at all. Lastly, and what it is most amazing that he should have forgotten, it was not the part of the Public of his deepest predilection which was concerned with romance. That it was the vulgar who were to have the last word was what his actions signified.

FLORENCE: DESIGN FOR A CITY

TAKE one bowl, one valley
Assisted by hills to peace,
And let the hills hold back the wind a little
Only turning the trees
Only dividing the shadows
With a simple movement of sun
Across the valley's face.

And then set cypresses up,
So dark they seem to contain their repeated shadows
In a straight and upward leap,
So dark that the sun seems to avoid them to show
How austere they are, stiff, admonishing gestures
Towards the city, yet also protective
To the deep houses that the sun makes more deep.

Here I say the mind is open, is freed;
Anchored only to frailest thoughts, we are
Triumphantly subdued to the light's full glare.
It is simple then to be a stranger,
To have a mind that is wide
To permit the city to settle between our thoughts,
As between those hills, and flower and glow inside.

Elizabeth Jennings

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W. S. Graham

Three Letters

WELCOME THEN ANYTIME

Welcome then anytime. Fare
Well as your skill's worth,
You able-handed sea-blade
Aglint with the inlaid
Scales of the herring host
And hosting light. Good morning
Said that. And that morning
Opened and fairly rose
Keeping sea-pace with us.
Sailed out on the long kyle.
Early there I could tell
Under the scaling light
The nerves of each sheared knot
Keelcleft twisting back
Astern to make the wake,
And I saw my death flash
For an instant white like a fish
In the second-sighted sea.

That death is where I lie
In this sea you inherit.
There is no counter to it.

Taken my dear as heir
To yes again the ever
Arriving sea, I wave
Us here out on the move.
May we both fare well through
This difficult element we
Hear welcome in. Farewell
Gives us ever away
To a better host. See, I
Hack steps on the water never
For one lull still but over
Flowing all ways I make
My ways. Always I make
My ways. And as you listen
Here at the felling bow
I'll be myself in vain
Always. Dear you who walk
Your solitude on these
Words, walk their silences
Hearing a morning say
A welcome I have not heard
In words I have not made.

And the good morning rose
Fairly over the bows
And whitely waving fray.
We hauled the nets. And all
That live and silver causeway
Heaving came to our side.

These words said Welcome. Fare
Them well from what they are.

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BURNED IN THIS ELEMENT

Burned in this element
To the bare bone, I am
Trusted on the language.
I am to walk to you
Through the night and through
Each word you make between
Each word I burn bright in
On this wide reach. And you,
Within what arms you lie,
Hear my burning ways
Across these darknesses
That move and merge like foam.
Lie in the world's room,
My dear, and contribute
Here where all dialogues write.

Younger in the towered
Tenement of night he heard
The shipyards with nightshifts
Of lathes turning their shafts.
His voice was a humble ear
Hardly turned to her.
Then in a welding flash
He found his poetry arm
And turned the coat of his trade.
From where I am I hear
Clearly his heart beat over
Clydeside's far hammers
And the nightshipping firth.
What's he to me? Only
Myself I died from into
These present words that move.
In that high tenement
I got a great grave.

Tonight in sadly need
Of you I move inhuman
Across this space of dread
And silence in my mind.
I walk the dead water
Burning language towards
You where you lie in the dark
Ascension of all words.
Yet where ? Where do you lie
Lost to my cry and hidden
Away from the word's downfall?
O offer some way tonight
To make your love take place
In every word. Reply.
Time's branches burn to hear.
Take heed. Reply. Here
I am driven burning on
This loneliest element. Break
Break me out of this night,
This silence where you are not,
Nor any within earshot.
Break break me from this high
Helmet of idiocy.
  Water water wallflower
  Growing up so high
  We are all children
  We all must die.
  Except Willie Graham
  The fairest of them all.
  He can dance and he can sing
  And he can turn his face to the wall.
  Fie, fie, fie for shame
  Turn your face to the wall again.
Yes laugh then cloudily laugh
Though he sat there as deaf
And worn to a stop
As the word had given him up.
Stay still. That was the sounding
Sea he moved on burning
His still unending cry.
That night hammered, and waved
Its starry shipyard arms,
And it came to inherit
His death where these words merge.
This is his night writ large.
In Greenock the bright breath
Of night's array shone forth
On the nightshifting town.
Thus younger burning in
The best of his puny gear
He early set out
To write him to this death
And to that great breath
Taking of the sea,
The graith of Poetry.
My musing love lie down
Within his arms. He dies
Word by each word into

Myself now at this last
Word I die in. This last.

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LIE WHERE YOU FELL AND LONGED

Lie where you fell and longed
Broken to fall to from
Grace in your maidenhooded
Cage. And further fall.
Lie down where in a word
That blinding greying bard,
Earl of an armed uprising,
Lifted his head to you
And made you right of way
To the silence-felling prow.
And tonight listen under
The watch kept by the height
Sailed and its gazing host.
Winter sits on the gable.

From where these words first fell
Fall to me now. Fall through
This high browbeating night
And slowly, my dear, loving
Take breath for both of us
In this poem in this house
Awake. Your name is long
A byword on my tongue.
You long remember me.
This room. The narrow lamp
Casting the net of light
On this element. The table
Scrubbed with salt and become
For me the grave's table.
And that same voice listening
And blindly trying the latch.
And listen, my love, almost
I heard the quay night bell
Strike on the sea wall.

Anyhow tonight here all
Is again almost at one
With us, and no, there's not
The least sorrow to shade
Or fear to fall. Dearly
Make haste now in the sweet
Oil-wending light keeping
Us endless for a moment.
Changing becomes you. Dress
In your loved best. Put on
Your roomy cramasie
And gloves of the wild fox.
Nor fear. You've been undone
By myriads everywhere always.
And here slip on your emerald
Deeps and your frilled shallows.
The dark befrond you. The first
Of light shall know you by
Your snares of the bright dew
Even wear your herring bells
To ring the changes and your
Jingling sea-charms along
Your tongue. To find your sea-thighs
Sail where the metaphor flies.
To find your best for me
Spring all your maiden locks.
I stand by what I see.
You blush like new. You're shy
The same. What nets and beds
We've drifted on. It's tides
And tides ago. And here,
Here's where you wept the first
Time and me with only
A few words to my name.
Lie longing down, my dear
Again. Cast in this gold
Wicklight this night within
This poem, we two go down
Roaring between the lines
To drown. Who hears? Who listens?

I entered. Enter after
Me here and encounter
Dimensions of a grave.
Sometimes night sinks its shaft
And I am crossed with light
Here where I lie in language
Braced under the immense
Weight of dumb founded silence.

I heard voices within
The empty lines and tenses.
The tiller takes my hand
In a telling grip. We drive
On in the white soaring
Meantime of fair morning.
Happy the threshold-whetted
Blade that lays us low
Each time for ever. My sweet

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Sea-singer shearing the wave
Engrave us where we fall.
Under the wanderlusting
Sky of morning waked
And worded beyond itself
By me to you, who leans
Down through the fanfared lists
To listen? A day to gladden.
A sight to unperish us from
The flashing wake unwinding
Us to our end. And quick,
Take hold, the quick foam blooms
And combs to our side. And now
Rounding the Rhinns, keep hold
And watch as the fisher flies
With beaks in the netting gale
That veers to the kill, and now
As you sail here look the word's
Bright garment from your eyes
Be for me still, steering
Here at my keeling trade
Over the white heathering
Foam of the tide-race.

Who asks to listen? And who
Do these words listen to
In some far equivalent?
Through me they read you through.
Present your world. Reply
Now at the growing end
As words rush to become
You changing at your best.
Stand by me here. The roar
Is rising. The old defender
Towers. His head soars.
He stands like downfall over
The high gables of morning
In kindling light. Under
His eye that blinds us now
We go down dazzled into
The crowded scroll of the wake.
As silence takes me back
Changed to my last word,

Reply. Present your world.
Gannet of God, strike.

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Alec Waugh

Maugham at Eighty

SOMERSET MAUGHAM celebrates his eightieth birthday this month. There is scarcely anyone living who can remember a time when he was not one of the most prominent figures upon the literary scene. For over twenty years he has enjoyed a unique supremacy. Writers, he has said more than once, have their ups and downs, but for nearly half a century the current of his own success has been unchecked. An occasional play may have been taken off after a few weeks' run, but its withdrawal has usually coincided with the presence of a novel high in the best-seller list. Few writers have dominated their day to an equivalent extent.

He has held the public's interest not only by his work but by his personality. Many of his stories have been told in the first person; he has appeared on the screen as the compère of his films; he has been photographed and interviewed so often that his appearance, habits, tastes, prejudices, general way of life, are familiar to all whom such matters interest. Yet even so, an air of mystery surrounds him. People continue to ask, "What is he really like?" A legend has grown up around him.

Right from the start he has been the object of curiosity and conjecture. His popularity in alternating terms of book-sales and box-office returns has been consistent, but his reputation in regard to critical opinion has known marked fluctuations. In 1918 W. L. George, who was very far from being a dilettante, published a book called *A Novelist on Novels*. In it, he posed the question, Who were the men who in 1940 would be occupying the positions at that moment filled by Wells, Bennett, Galsworthy, and Conrad? Maugham is not mentioned in the book although *Of Human Bondage* had been published only a few months before. It may well seem today astonishing that he was not, but his career in retrospect presents both in his life and work a fascinating sequence of surprises, anomalies, and contradictions. On an occasion such as this it is interesting to plot their graph. And in the first place it is important to remember that though it was as a novelist that he began his career, at the turn of the century, it was as a dramatist, a writer of social comedies, that eight years later he achieved his first spectacular success.

HIS first novel, *Liza of Lambeth*, was a brutal, vivid story of life in Bermondsey for which his experiences as a doctor had given him first-hand information, "his little black bag protecting him in the foul courts that the police hesitated to enter." It earned him in royalties during the first year only £20 but it impressed the critics and its reception encouraged him to abandon medicine. He had been left a small sum of money and he decided to invest it in himself. He went abroad and set himself to become a writer. He was then twenty-three.

During the next few years he published several novels including *Mrs. Craddock*. They did not earn much money but they were reviewed respectfully and at length. He was also working upon plays, one of which, *A Man of Honour*, was produced by the Stage Society. It was subsequently published in the *Fortnightly Review*, but it was too sombre and realistic to attract the commercial theatre. It contained, however, a scene of comedy, whose reception made Maugham suspect that he would be wise to exploit this line. He wrote *Lady Frederick*. In its big scene a woman in her thirties reveals herself to a young admirer without her make-up. Managers shook their heads. No leading actress, they assured him, would display

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herself at such a disadvantage; Maugham wrote another comedy, *Mrs. Dot*. This time, Managers told him that he was too cynical. But he persisted and at last had a lucky break. A play at the Court had to be taken off earlier than had been expected, and its successor was not yet ready. *Lady Frederick* was put on as a stop-gap for a six-weeks' run. The scene in which the leading actress revealed the intimacies of her toilet "brought down the house" and the play ran a year.

Managers now decided that after all he was not too cynical and sought his wares. He had a number of plays in the drawer—*Mrs. Dot*, *Jack Straw*, *The Explorer*. Within a few weeks his name was on the boards of four simultaneous successes, and *Punch* had a cartoon showing Shakespeare enviously looking at the playbills. That was in 1908.

Few writers have enjoyed a more sensational success. But it was not the kind of success to impress the *avant-garde* criticism of the day. Popularity is always an object of distrust and 1908 marked the peak of a period that was in violent reaction against the languid eccentricities of the nineties. Art, it was then held, should have a purpose: and it was to the plays of Shaw and Galsworthy and the novels of H. G. Wells that the young turned for authority and guidance. Maugham, in their eyes, had no message. He did not want to improve people or to expose abuses. It was held that "he stood for nothing" and that he was merely "an entertainer." His stock in 1910 stood lower with the intelligentsia than it had in 1900, and for quite a while nothing happened to make the intelligentsia reconsider its verdict.

For the next seven years he wrote exclusively for the stage. Walking past the Comedy Theatre where the "House Full" boards were up outside *Mrs. Dot*, he thought, at the sight of a sunset above Panton Street, "Thank God, I can look at a sunset now without having to think how to describe it." He planned never to write another book. But he had reckoned without his temperament. He found himself living in his own past. "It became," he wrote, "such a burden to me that I made up my mind that I could only regain my peace by writing it all down in the form of a novel." That was shortly before World War I and the novel was *Of Human Bondage*.

It was published in 1916 and it made little stir. It had no bearing on the war and the very qualities that have given it a capacity to interest the readers of later generations prevented it from succeeding then. It dealt with permanent problems at a time when the public was concerned with the day's events. No, it is not surprising that W. L. George writing in 1918 should have failed to realise on the evidence of a single book that the course of Maugham's career had changed direction. The betting was a hundred to one against any such occurrence. But this happened to be the hundredth time.

"Success," he was to write twenty years later in *The Summing Up*, "may well cut the author off from the material that is its source," and this might have been his fate. His plays earned him a great deal of money at a time when income tax was low; he bought himself a house in Mayfair, and soon after married. Had the marriage proved a happy one he would presumably have led a fashionable metropolitan life, writing Mayfair comedies, until after a dozen years or so his material wore thin. Luckily for literature that did not happen. His marriage was a failure. Personal unhappiness made him dissatisfied both with the life that he was leading and the work he was producing. "I was tired of the man I was," he wrote, "and it seemed to me that by a long journey to some far country I might renew myself."

He was forty then, and the exigencies of his war-time duties in Intelligence simplified the cutting of his links with England. They gave him a chance of visiting the South Pacific. As soon as the war was over he went to China. The South Seas gave him *Rain* and *The Moon and Sixpence*, but the Far East was to give him more; it brought him back to the material he understood. He had roots in Malaya to an extent that he had never had in Mayfair.

He had been educated at one of the smaller Public Schools, and it was from this type of school that were recruited the bank clerks, district officers and planters who people his Malayan stories. The lives that were led in England by the cousins and brothers of his characters, in the prim domesticities of suburbia,

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would have bored him inexpressibly but their own lives against the background of the East were vivid, violent, and dramatic: or perhaps it would be more true to say that he interpreted their lives in terms of violent and vivid drama.

He wrote always about what are called "ordinary people," but he showed them under the pressure of unusual circumstance. A large number of his Far Eastern stories end with suicide or murder, and adultery is the pivot for a large proportion of them. They are long stories, 15,000 to 20,000 words, roughly the length of a play, and two of them, *Rain* and *The Letter*, were capable of almost direct transference to the stage. His mind was adjusted to the types of plot and theme that fitted within this circumference. It is a length that few writers have managed to employ. But it is a very satisfactory length. It takes an hour to read, and it gives scope for the introduction of settings and of minor characters. By writing at this length Maugham was able to keep the background of the East constantly before the reader's eye. He rarely attempted what is called "fine writing" but his scenic descriptions are masterpieces of accurate observation. You touch and smell the East. You can understand how in that atmosphere "ordinary people" could be driven to desperate remedies.

He recreated himself during a decade of travel and his output during this period was remarkable: two novels—*The Moon and Sixpence* and *The Painted Veil*; two travel books *On a Chinese Screen* and *The Gentleman in the Parlour*; one of his very best plays, *East of Suez*; the collection of secret service stories which introduced the character of Ashenden, his *alter ego*; the six South Sea stories of *The Trembling of a Leaf*; the six Malayan stories of *The Casuarina Tree* which included *The Letter*; a number of short stories awaiting publication in book form. 1922 also saw the triumphant success of a play written in 1915, *Our Betters*, while *The Constant Wife*, though in London it never recovered from an unlucky first night, ran for many months in New York. The period may be said to close with the gay, light-hearted and malicious *Cakes and Ale*.

The publication of *Cakes and Ale* saw Maugham established as the most discussed personality in English Letters. He was not only producing a sequence of exciting and dramatic stories, but he was in tune with the temper of his time. He had had no message for the eager young Fabians of 1908 who had discussed woman's suffrage over glasses of Russian tea, but he had for an exhausted post-war generation, that had achieved victory at the cost of immense self-sacrifice only to find that the war that was to end war—H. G. Wells' phrase—was being followed by the peace that would end peace. Maugham was in the same leaking boat. In spite of his wealth and fame he was reputed to be an embittered man. He had won, after long labour, to success, only to find its savour that of dead sea fruit. Disenchanted himself, he offered to his readers the philosophy and pattern of escape. Where Kipling had presented the British Empire in terms of "The White Man's Burden" Maugham presented it as a means of cutting free from the Western "rat-race," from the profitless amassing of possessions that moth and dust were waiting to corrupt. *The Moon and Sixpence*, *The Casuarina Tree*, and *The Fall of Edward Barnard* coloured the outlook of the disillusioned 1920's just as *Anne Veronica* and *Man and Superman* had fired the optimism of the last Edwardians. Maugham was the mouthpiece of that decade.

For ten years he lived in suitcases. Then he felt the need of a home, a base, and bought high on Cap Ferrat the villa that can be seen right along the coast from Antibes, white and rectangular against the pines, and set on its gatepost the sign against the evil eye that is stamped upon all his books.

In the preface he wrote in 1952 to the selected edition of Kipling's stories, he suggested that authors usually reach the full development of their powers between the ages of 35 and 40, do their best work for the next fifteen to twenty years, then start to decline. He may have thought of himself as being about to enter upon this final stage when he moved into the Villa Mauresque.

WHEN the Germans broke through to the Channel ports in the spring of 1940, Maugham, in his sixty-fifth year, had to make a snap decision. Should he stay on at the Villa

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Mauresque or risk a return to England through submarine-infested waters. There was a third alternative—a phial of sleeping pills in his bathroom drawer. He never considered the possibility of letting himself be taken prisoner, but he must in that hour of decision have contrasted the dangers and discomforts of that journey with the amount of enjoyment life had still to offer him.

It may not have seemed to offer him so very much. A few years back he had retired from the theatre with his last three plays little more than half successes. In *The Summing Up*, published two years before, he had stated that the main fabric of his work was now complete and though he might add a turret here or a gable there, what was to come would be decoration. He had exhausted his Far East material; the south of France had supplied him with one or two amusing plots, *The Three Fat Women of Antibes* in particular: but the issues in that charming playground were less vital, less dramatic. He had made a disappointing trip to the West Indies. I was to remark to him twelve years later on the eve of sailing for the Leeward Islands that although I had spent many months in the Caribbean I had only found two or three plots there. He had had, he said, a similar experience. Kipling had told him that there were plenty of plots there "but that they were mine not his. I went but I found nothing."

The life of the French convicts on Devil's Island gave him two short stories, and a motif in *A Christmas Holiday*. But that was all.

In 1937 he had gone to India. He had felt for many years that Kipling had covered the ground too completely for it to be worth his while to go. But Kipling's world no longer existed, and "I should be trying," he said, "to see a different India. I found a lot. As soon as the maharajahs realised that I didn't want to go on tiger hunts but that I was interested in seeing poets and philosophers, they were very helpful. I planned to return there in the autumn of 1939: the war prevented that. I think I should have got a great deal from a second visit."

As he deliberated the alternative to that phial of sleeping pills, he must have suspected that in the cancelling of that trip to India his last chance of recreating himself had gone. In *A Personal Record* he tells us that he decided to return because he felt that one or two people in England might still need him. He made the decision on unselfish grounds. But had he taken those pills he would have missed a climax to his career that he can scarcely in his most ambitious moments have envisaged.

The most for which writers can reasonably hope in their last years is a quiet sunset. A new generation will have knocked down the gates, a new generation that will demand a different nourishment. The ageing novelist may be treated with deference, may sit upon committees and preside at banquets, but his books will not be read. That might well have befallen Maugham had he spent his later sixties in the sunshine of the south of France, surrounded by his books and friends and pictures, looking towards the Esterelles, whose final peaks must have reminded him of the Moorea that he had described so well. He had everything "that should accompany old age." But the same destiny that quarter of a century earlier broke up his marriage, once again intervened, destroyed the atmosphere of comfort that might have stifled him and gave him a last opportunity to recreate himself.

He returned to England by the coal boat, to find no useful occupation. He spent a few weeks in London, then crossed to America. Control of currency was strict. He could take no money out of England. His continental income was frozen and he arrived in New York with two dollars in his pocket, to be instructed by the British Treasury authorities in Washington that he must turn over to them all the dollars that he earned, in return for which they would make him what they considered a reasonable allowance. He was homeless and alone, but his publishers lent him a bungalow in the Carolinas, and there, in exile, driven back upon himself, he set to work again upon a major novel. That novel, *The Razor's Edge*, was as lucky in its timing in the second war, as *Of Human Bondage* had been unlucky in the first. Wartime conditions, with the black-out and the curtailment of entertainment, had created a demand for reading matter that the publishers could not satisfy. Old books went out of print, and though new books were issued in rationed quantities the standard

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of contemporary writing was very low. The young writers were in uniform, the elder ones were either too busy or too harassed to write well or had put aside their pens for war work. It was, in 1944, both for the general reader and the critic, an immense relief to be offered a mature, adult novel, the work of a perfected craftsman, working within his powers, with an exact knowledge of those powers and with the sense of reserves behind him. *The Razor's Edge* is told in the first person and nowhere has Maugham deployed that particular technique with more assurance. Never had he been more mellow.

The timing for the theme too was lucky. The plot is that of *The Fall of Edward Barnard*. (How often authors rewrite their old stories after twenty-five years from a different angle: *Theatre* is a retelling of *Mrs. Craddock*.) Two friends, Americans, fall in love with the same girl. Their friendship is not ruined by her choice between them. The fiancé goes to Europe to make his fortune; but while away he loses his faith in "the American way of life," refuses to return to America and stands aside while the girl marries the other man. It is the same plot as *Edward Barnard*, but the theme is different. For whereas Edward Barnard made an escapist's choice, living on in Tahiti, idly, with a pretty Polynesian, the hero of *The Razor's Edge* refused the conventional pattern out of a discovery in himself of a sense of purpose, a working towards the life of a mystic and ascetic. It was a theme appropriate to the hour. Escapism is sympathetic to a decade of disenchanted lassitude, but it is not sympathetic in an hour of strain and action. In *The Razor's Edge* Maugham offered hope; he had got past bitterness. Yet he was not throwing out his solution as a sop. He wrote as a man with faith.

In theme and content, *The Razor's Edge* is one of his major books. It is a long novel with a number of secondary stories woven into the central plot. Yet "the direction of interest," which is his own definition of a plot, is never lost. The book was a great immediate success and it laid the foundation for the fame he was to enjoy after the war, when he returned to France.

Fame is the proper word to use. During the 1930's he had been sensitive to the lack of recognition that he had received from the intelligentsia. "When clever young men write essays about contemporary fiction they never think of considering me." He said more than once that he considered himself unlucky to have begun writing short stories at a time when Chekhov's stock stood so high and Maupassant's so low, and the preface to his collected edition of short stories, *Altogether*, consists in large part of a comparison between Maupassant and Chekhov. He had also mentioned that the French admire order, pattern, and form, and that his reputation stood higher in France than it did in England. More than once he had felt it necessary to defend the magazine short story. But now he had the highbrows on his side. Time had placed him in perspective.

A writer, he had said, should produce an *œuvre*, and time had shown how substantial a body of work his was; it had shown too how much of it was impervious to time. His back books were in demand. Several of his plays had been revived: *The Circle* in London, *The Constant Wife* in New York. Television, in search of plays and stories, turned to him. The younger generation that had broken down the gates could not compete with him in its own post-war media. But the final proof of his skill as a story-teller was the bold experiment of producing four of his short stories in a single film. The odds against such an experiment's success were high. But *Quartet* succeeded so triumphantly that it was followed by *Trio* and later by *Encore*. Could any other story-teller have stood that test? One or two of the stories were altered out of a belief that their screen effect would thus be heightened, in particular *The Colonel's Lady*. The stories that were altered were the least effective. Maugham was himself the best judge of how to tell his own kind of story.

At the end of *A Writer's Notebook*, Maugham allows himself to wonder what part, if any, of his work will be read a century hence. He is becomingly modest on the issue, but at the same time he is not unconscious of his unique position. *Of Human Bondage* is the most read of his

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books and the most generally admired. I asked him once if he considered it his best. He said he had no idea, since he had not read it since he corrected the final proofs. It may seem odd that curiosity should not have sent him back to it, but it is typical of him that he should have resisted the impulse, knowing that he could do nothing now to better it.

In *A Writer's Notebook* he expresses doubt as to whether so long a book can hope to survive the pressure of the future. But it is, it seems to me, on other grounds that *Of Human Bondage* is less likely to appeal to succeeding generations than many of his short stories. He has said himself that though a writer may set out to draw a picture of life, it can never be more than a partial one, but if he is fortunate he will succeed in doing something else, he will draw a complete picture of himself. And though Maugham has called *Of Human Bondage* an autobiographical novel, there is less of the essential Maugham there than in *Cakes and Ale* and in *The Moon and Sixpence*. Philip in *Of Human Bondage* may have shared many of Maugham's experiences, but he is not Maugham; he is an obscure doctor, not a successful author. A man with Maugham's temperament would never have remained obscure.

In a few years time, inevitably, Maugham's reputation will undergo a slump. He has been so long supreme, and those who enthrone a new deity will find it necessary to increase the praise of the new god by decrying the qualities of the old. But I cannot believe that the reaction will last for long. Several of his books may go out of print for ever, but there are so few great story-tellers, and few have equalled Maugham's capacity to carry your interest on from one page to the next. You cannot put him down, not only because of the excellence of the plot but for the manner of its telling. It is not chance that led him to put an Arab charm against the evil eye upon the covers of his books. He has a deep affinity with those story-tellers of the market place who hold their audience with the power of their eye, the intonation of their voice, the movements of their hands. He lays his individual spell upon you, so that in retrospect you remember not only the tale itself, but the teller of it. The story is a medium, a means to an end, and future generations will, I am very sure, be as fascinated as we ourselves have been by this enigmatic man, the object of so much conjecture, a man at the same time so thwarted and so rewarded, a man who has been offered the sampling of every dish the banquet of life has for offering, yet has been denied on his own admission the very consolations that alone make life tolerable for the vast majority of human beings; a man so disillusioned, so unself-deceived, so ruthless towards himself yet to others so invariably helpful; a man who in the last analysis has always been upon the side of what was true and simple, of what the Greeks called "the beautiful and good."

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Music

WORDS AND MUSIC

I CANNOT imagine anyone who is interested in either of the metrical arts not being fascinated by Dr. Curt Sachs' recent book: *Rhythm and Tempo: A Study in Music History* (Dent, 42s.). Immensely learned though he is, Dr. Sachs has a gift for clear exposition with which scholars are not always endowed and, except for a few pages on Proportional Signatures which, I must confess, made my poor head go round, the reader with only an amateur knowledge of music will find him quite easy to follow.

To read any history of music is to be unpleasantly reminded of the fantastic narrowness of the conventional concert repertoire. Despite the curse of Babel, it is much easier to get to know foreign and ancient literature than it is to hear any music other than that composed in Europe after 1600. Of course it is always *possible* that we are not missing much. Musicologists have their own and, for them, quite proper approach to music, but it does not always coincide with the listener's. I am tantalised, for example, by the few bars quoted by Dr. Sachs from the French manneristic composers of the 14th century, but when I find that Dr. Sachs admires Edgar Varèse's *Ionization*, a work which I have had the misfortune to hear, I get worried.

Dr. Sachs recognises two basic kinds of rhythm, divisive and additive. Divisive rhythm is based on the human stride and is therefore 2/4 or 4/4 time. The East knows no other and cannot recognise a rhythm in triple time. Additive rhythm, which Dr. Sachs believes to be associated with the "tension and relaxation that we experience in breathing in and out," can be on the other hand, and generally is in triple time, for its patterns are not based on "a certain duration to be divided into equal parts, but rather a grouping composed of longer and shorter elements, such as 2+1 or 3+2 units, or any other arrangements of shorts and longs." In poetry the approximate equivalents are the purely accentual prosody of, say, Anglo-Saxon poetry on the one hand, and the strictly quantitative metres of Greek poetry on the other. French and Italian poetry, which reckon by the number of syllables, are, presumably, more additive than divisive. Where English poetry should be placed, which, since *Ormulum*, is composed of feet, but feet which are made by accent not by length, I am not quite sure.

In music, according to Dr. Sachs, "any rhythm related to harmony must be of a divisive kind. Additive rhythm belongs to civilisations without harmony." The former he associates with classicistic cultures and a feeling in the visual arts for perspective, the latter with more other-worldly cultural phases. Thus, in the Gothic Middle Ages, ternary time and counterpoint are dominant; in the High Renaissance, 4/4 time and harmony carry all before them; since 1900, Dr. Sachs sees a return to additive rhythms.

The association of accentual double time with perspective is a fascinating one, but when Dr. Sachs says "Greek-Roman art took an important turn to perspective, imperfect, it is true, at the beginning of the Common Era, as evidenced in the paintings of Pompeii and Herculaneum. There is a strong possibility that the change from metre to accentual rhythm in later antiquity was a kindred phenomenon," I become suspicious. Early Latin poetry, like vulgar-spoken Latin, was an accentual tongue, upon which, during the classic period of Latin poetry, a Greek prosody was imposed. If Dr. Sachs' generalisations were always true, then it would follow that in their early days, the Romans were interested in perspective: and what about the Germanic peoples who always had an accentual verse?

By the time a language can have a literature, it is more or less a fixed medium and its rhythmic possibilities are much more limited, much more resistant to cultural changes than

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music, so that exact parallels are difficult to draw. Compare, for instance, the influence of 16th century classical humanism on music with its influence on English verse. It affected the former to such an extent that "most of the metrical songs written between 1500 and 1600 are strictly note against note and syllabic with their longs and shorts in the regular ratio 2:1"; but the poets like Sidney, Spenser, and Campion who, under the same influence, attempted to write in classical metres abandoned them in a few years, for it was immediately obvious that such a prosody ran counter to the nature of the English language. In comparison with music, the difference between the "freest" kind of verse line, e.g. that of Shakespeare's late blank verse, and the strictest, e.g. that of the Pope couplet, is very slight indeed.

Dr. Sachs is on much safer ground, I think, in his parallels between music and architecture, e.g. when he sees in both the Gothic cathedral and the isorhythms of the 13th-century composers a common "spiritualisation and abstraction of tone or stone under the sign of abstract number," or the same short sudden flurry of restlessness at the beginning of the 15th century in Italian music and the work of Jacopo della Quercia in Bologna.

One of the many pleasures his book affords is similar to that of watching a film in which a flower grows up in a few minutes; one sees history pulsating, becoming itself rhythmical. In the 14th century the North is complicated, rapid, ternary in time, while Italy is slower, more lyrical, binary; the Italian style triumphs over the Northern but then, in the last third of the 15th century, a new, excited period returns, to be again overcome by the stateliness and binary time of the High Renaissance; by 1600 polyphony is being attacked for destroying the metrical values of words, but by 1680 the Italians are beginning to tire of *Stile Recitativo* and to prefer the Neapolitan *da capo* aria; in the same century ternary time predominates over binary; in 1700 Italy is the home of *cantabile*, expressiveness and wide tempo range, while Germany is the home of polyphony and moderate tempi, but by 1750 the positions are reversed; the dynamism of Baroque music shows itself in its fondness for entrances on an upbeat, the elegance of Rococo music in its reluctance to approach a note directly and its tendency, particularly in France, to dotted notes, i.e. to lengthening the "good" notes and shortening the "bad"; and so it goes on.

I hope Dr. Sachs will forgive me if I now give up trying to review his excellent book, and concern myself with a problem, which is not his subject, but which his book necessarily raises, namely the relation between musical rhythm and verse rhythm, a relation which is of importance to anyone, who, like myself, is interested in the musical setting of words. I must, of course, confine myself to the English language.

Rhythm and Measurement

On page 68 Dr. Sachs makes a statement which amazes me because it seems to run contrary to the whole argument of his book:

> Philologists have been asking why rhythmical poetry, as opposed to music, is allowed to violate the evidently fundamental quality of all rhythm: the exactly equal distance between stimuli or groups of stimuli.

This assumption is utterly false. It is a fundamental law of rhythm, as of any æsthetic quality, that it is *perceptible* but *not* mathematically measurable. If the distance between stimuli were *exactly* equal, there would be no rhythm whatsoever, any more than there is in the noise of a road drill. Rhythm is to time what symmetry is to space. We call the human face symmetrical—two eyes at equal distance from the nose, two ears at the same level, etc. —and in books on anatomical proportions mathematical norms are given, but any face in which the symmetry were really mathematically exact, in which, for instance, the two eyes were *identically* the same size and shape, would appear to us, not as a face, but as a lifeless mask.

It certainly looks, at first sight, as if musical rhythm was based on identity. On paper, if one is given the metronome marking, all quarter notes are identical in length, but if the work could be played, which is doubtful, exactly as it appears on paper, it would not sound rhythmical but mechanical like a musical box. The reason why this fact is so easy to see in verse and so difficult to see in music is, probably, because in music there are so many other variables like pitch, volume, colour, the range in permissible "rubato" beyond which a rhythmical pattern becomes

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unrecognisable, is so much narrower in the latter art. In a line of verse like Prior's

The god | of us verse | men, you know, | child, the sun

the unaided human ear can perceive the difference in exact length between the two similar rhythmical units *the god of* and *you know, child,* while it would probably take a very sensitive instrument to detect the bar to bar variations in a performance of a Mozart symphony.

MUSIC AND VERSE QUANTITY

Though neither musical nor verse rhythm are based on identities, the differences between them are so great as to make it impossible to express one in terms of the other. If this has not always been clear, the probable reason is that most primitive poetry is not spoken but chanted or recited to a musical accompaniment. When Plato laid down the rule that "Rhythm and harmony are regulated by the words, and not the words by them," he was really only objecting to a style of music in which the distortion of verbal rhythm by musical rhythm was greater than he was accustomed to. Indeed it is difficult to see how the basic principle of quantitative prosody, namely, that all syllables may be divided into long and short, the former being twice as long as the latter, could have been arrived at except through music for, even in a language with little accent like Greek, it would be obvious in speaking that all long and all short syllables were not the same length. It is only by singing them that they can be made to appear so.

If one asks, for example, why the *ā* in *fāther* is called long and the *ă* in *făthom* is called short, one cannot help noticing that it is much easier to sustain a note on the first than on the second.

TEMPO IN MUSIC AND VERSE

Dr. Sachs tells us the tempo range in music from Adagio to Prestissimo is about 1 : 4. Taking the Nightmare Song from *Iolanthe* as an example of a verse Prestissimo, and *Tears, idle tears* as an Adagio, I find that, in a given period, I recite about twice as many syllables of the former as of the latter. However, much of this difference is due, not to a faster delivery of the syllables themselves, but to the absence of rests, of the cæsuras I make in the Tennyson. The widest tempo range in verse, that is, is less than 1 : 2.

Further, this range lies in the rapid half of the musical tempi. Thus, if I recite a hymn at the pace at which it is normally sung, the verse rhythm disappears. The iambs of *Now Thank we all our God,* for instance, turn into spondees, the dactyls of *Sun of my soul* into molossoi.

The slowest tempo at which it is possible to take spoken verse is, musically, an Allegretto.

QUANTITATIVE AND ACCENTUAL FEET

I am not sure that Dr. Sachs is fully aware of how completely different a rhythmical significance the prosodic terms dactyl, anapæst, trochee, iamb, have in an accentual prosody from that they have in a quantitative. In this he is not alone; the medieval composers who were setting accentual Church Latin, continued to scan it as if it were Vergil.

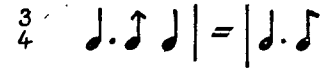
Thus Dr. Sachs believes that dactyls and anapæsts are in binary time, trochees and iambs in ternary. So they are in classical Greek and Latin, but in an accentual tongue like English, the exact opposite is the case: it is the trochees and iambs that are in binary time.

To demonstrate this, let me take the musical examples given on pp. 22–23 of Dr. Sach's book and try fitting English words to them.

Ex. 2. Beethoven. Seventh Symphony. Slow movement.

Musically and quantitatively, this is, as Dr. Sachs says, an adonic. But when I try to sing to it an English adonic, e.g. *beau-ti-ful | ball-pen,* the second beat of the bar confers too much accent on the *ti*. The nearest approximation I can find makes the first foot a bacchic, e.g. *Come, come a | way, dear.*

Ex. 4. Beethoven. Ninth Symphony. Scherzo.



Quantitatively, cyclic dactyls. But this time there is an excess of accent on the third syllable, so that the accentual dactyl *beautiful* becomes a

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cretic, *beau-ti-ful*. Actually, in this case, it is not the temporal value of the notes themselves that is at fault, but the rest: had the phrase been repeated without interruption, English dactyls could be sung to it.

Ex. 5. Bach. Brandenburg Concerto ♯ 3

Anapæsts, says Dr. Sachs; so I try

The Assyr | ian came down | like a wolf | on the fold

and the music makes it sound like this, a set of cretics.

The Assyr | ian came down | like a wolf | on the fold.

Ex. 6. Brahms. Deutsches Requiem. Second movement

Iambs to Dr. Sachs. But set to it

My mo- | ther groaned, | my fa- | ther wept

and the accented syllables are dragged out to a disproportionate length. On the other hand, if I turn the half notes into quarters, the Byron anapæsts, which would not go with the previous examples, go very nicely.

Finally, an example of my own. Bach. Fugue in G minor.

Dr. Prout, the famous Victorian organist, composed words for this which are prosodically admirable

O | E-be- | ne-zer | Prout
You | are a | fun-ny | man;
You-ou | make | Bach | fugues
Just as | sil-ly | as you | can.

From this I conclude:

1. An exact identity of English verse rhythms and musical rhythms is impossible.
2. In setting accentual verse, the distortion is least when accented syllables are allotted to down beats, unaccented to up-beats.
3. The approximate musical values of the commonest English feet are as follows. The tempo in all cases is an Allegro.

(E.g. *Beggar's Opera:* "*How happy could I be with either.*")

APT DISTORTION

Because some distortion is inevitable, it does not follow that the composer is free to ignore the verbal prosody altogether, nor that he is bound at all times to adopt the most "natural" method, setting all iambic verse in binary time and all anapæstic in ternary. An apt setting of a line is one which achieves a just balance between its rhythm and its content. In English verse, with its large number of common syllables, it is often impossible to know the correct scansion of a line without knowing its context, and the sense of the words is often that which settles rival claims. E.g.

Come away, come away, death,
And in sad cypress let me be laid;
Fly away, fly away, breath;
I am slain by a fair cruel maid.

The fourth line of this can only be scanned as anapæsts.

I am slain | by a fair | cru-el maid

But lines one and three could, in theory, be scanned in three ways:

As anapæsts

Come a-way, | come a-way, | death

As trochees with catalexis

Come a- | way, | come a- | way, | death

As dactyls

Come a-way, | come a-way, | death

In fact, however, the first alternative, which is the one Dr. Sachs chooses, is impossible, because the spacing of the unaccented and accented syllables will make the line sound,

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spoken or sung, like an impatient nursemaid calling a disobedient child. (Had the line run

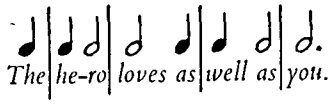
Come a-way, | come a-way | to the fields | and the woods

an anapæstic scansion, on the other hand, would be the only possible one.) A composer could, I believe, use the second scansion, if it suited him; but the third scansion is the only possible one for speaking.

In *Dido and Æneas* occurs the following couplet:

Fear no danger to ensue,
The hero loves as well as you

If nothing but the rhythm be considered, the aptest setting would be to some four-four tune like Tallis' Canon, but the result would be lacking in the martial vigour which the meaning of the words requires. Purcell, accordingly, sets it to a syncopated $\frac{3}{4}$ time, thus



Substitute a heroine for a hero and the syncopation might seem out of place, and more fitting a straightforward waltz time, thus

ENGLISH VERSE AND ADDITIVE RHYTHMS

In so far that English feet are based on accent not length, and that the predominant rhythm in English verse is iambic (musically, that is, in binary time), one must class its poetic rhythms as divisive.

The language, however, permits certain licences which often give an additive effect. Inversion of an iamb into a trochee has always been permitted and, except between 1700 and 1780, the substitution of trisyllabic feet, limited only by the proviso that the underlying iambic basis must not be destroyed; further, unlike French verse, English verse not only permits but prefers a constant shift in position of the cæsura from line to line.

He ended, and the heav'nly Audience loud
Sung Halleluia, as the sound of seas,
Through multitude that sung. Just are thy ways,
Righteous are thy decrees on all thy Work;
Who can extenuate thee? Next, to the Son,
Destined restorer of Mankind, by whom
New Heav'n and Earth shall to the Ages rise,
Or down from Heav'n descend.
(*Paradise Lost. Book X.*)

It would be very difficult, if the fifth line of this passage were quoted by itself, to guess that the base is iambic, for, if it be read in strict conformity with its norm, the result is a monstrosity.

Who can | exten | uate thee? | Next to | the Son

It can, however, be read naturally and its variations explained.

Who can | ex-ten- | u-ate thee | ? Next | to the Son

First foot. Inversion. Trochee for iamb.
Second foot. Iamb.
Third foot. Substitution. Anapæst for iamb.
Fourth foot. Catalectic iamb. The "rest" of the cæsura replacing the unaccented syllable.
Fifth foot. Substitution. Anapæst for iamb.

This is an extreme case, but in even the most "regular" verse, the emphasis on the accented syllables varies, so that one of them very often almost becomes unaccented, e.g. in the second line of

Those ghosts of beauty ling'ring there abide
And haunt the places where their honour died.
(Pope.)

the accent of *where* is very nearly suppressed, making the iamb *-es where* almost a pyrrhic.

The effect, in the Milton passage, of the constant cæsura shift is to provide two sets of foot groupings: on the one hand there is the recurrent symmetrical grouping by line—5 : 5 : 5 : 5 . . .; on the other the assymmetrical grouping by pause—$1\frac{1}{2}$: $3\frac{1}{2}+2\frac{1}{2}$: $2\frac{1}{2}$: 3 : 2 : 3 : 2 : 4 : 1+2 : 3.

That is enough, or more than enough, for now. No quarrels are as bitter as those of persons whose prosodic theories differ: I like to think this testifies to the interest of the subject.

W. H. Auden

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Letter from Teheran

PERSIA: LAND OF UNREALITIES

VERY few cars travel the road over the border between Turkey and Persia at Bazergan, located near the double peak of Ararat. For the small trickle of traffic that passes this way, one bus a day is really sufficient. The road winds its way through the dozing frontier village, past a massive arched gateway into the inner court of a square building which looks like a fort from the Middle Ages and yet has a surprisingly contemporary air. (In fact, it has only been standing for a few years.) Across the courtyard there is a low brick wall; on one side flutters the red Turkish flag with the half moon and silver star, and on the other the green, white, and red Persian tricolour with its faded lion bearing a sword and in the background its golden sun, almost invisible with age. At the narrow passage-way through the wall stand the two sentries in khaki: the Turk with the flat helmet of the British Tommy, the Persian wearing one that is brimless, American-style.

While the Turkish sentries stir themselves out of their siesta there is time to look round. Although the frontier building was clearly designed as a single structure, there is no mistaking the difference between the two sides. On the Turkish side the roof is nearly covered with red tiles, while the Persians have been content to cover theirs with corrugated iron sheets. One section of the roof behind the Persian lion-banner has collapsed and no effort seems to have been made to put it up again.

The Turks, with their courteous manner and tedious formalities, have completed their customs examination. It is time to prepare ourselves for the same procedure on the other side. Or so we think: but it seems that on the Persian frontier luggage is not examined. A sentry asks for our passports and disappears behind a door. In a few moments he is back again, waves us on, and salutes.

It seems impossible that we are to be let off so lightly and we expect at any moment to be halted again. But nothing happens and so we move on downhill, over a bumpy road which shows signs of having seen better days. A gorge opens in the rocky landscape; between the vertical slopes there is a thick mass of beautiful green poplars surrounded by the characteristic low clay walls. A green track winds its way among the trees, and then suddenly, on the left, through an opening in the trees, we catch our first breathtaking glimpse of a Persian town. With its steep mountain paths and steps, it climbs dizzily up to the rock face which appears at this point to be more than vertical and to overhang towards us. The houses are of burnt clay, interspersed with a few coloured rectangular structures. Crowning it all stands a palatial edifice which is joined to a number of lavishly decorated subsidiary buildings.

But there is little time to speculate how this town could have found its way into this lonely valley. Another policeman has seen our car and ordered us to halt. There is much headshaking over our passports and much talking in Persian which I can only answer with a helpless shrug of the shoulders. Then a decision is made. The policeman climbs on to the running-board and waves us back to the police-station. This turns out to be a garden pavilion in rococo style set in beautiful surroundings, with pillars and arched windows, incongruous and charming.

Inside, a policeman rises from a dirty camp-bed, inspects our passports (upside down), and disappears. A second policeman arrives, thumbs through our papers (upside down), and also disappears, this time taking our passports with him. For an hour I have to sit and wait, perched on a low stool, while a third policeman busies himself at an improvised writing desk. He is a man of about fifty, tall, lean, melancholy, and handsome. His temples have sunk inwards, his fine sensitive mouth seems to convey a boundless sorrow. His long, aristocratic hands delve aimlessly and uselessly among a pile of documents, but his deep-blue eyes stare unseeingly into the distance. A caller enters with some

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request and addresses a flood of Persian words to the keeper of the public order, but he hardly seems to notice the petitioner and only occasionally, when the unfortunate caller becomes particularly insistent, withdraws his gaze for a moment from the dim distance, unwillingly utters a few weary words, and returns at once to his abstracted gazing. Suddenly it occurs to me what might be the explanation of this extraordinary behaviour; the dreamlike gaze, the tired movements, the deep hollows on either side of the forehead are all unmistakable traits of the opium smoker.

Or could I be mistaken? There is no means of finding out. But this picture of the man in the garden pavilion at Makou has haunted me ever since. Those delicate limbs and features, the profound melancholia, the soft and dreamy attitude of utter helplessness in the face of life's problems—all this, and with it the background, at least in my imagination, of opium smoking, and the look of distant contemplation fixed on the infinite horizons but missing entirely the objects in its immediate neighbourhood, still seem to me to be the absolute embodiment of everything Persian. It sums up all my subsequent impressions of the country: noble, decayed, and lacking in self-mastery.

THE business of the passports was cleared up satisfactorily. We were of course quite justified in our misgivings about the extraordinarily rapid completion of the formalities at the border. The sentry at the frontier post only dealt with the inspection of passports. The customs control was situated a few hundred yards further on, and as there was at this point neither a barrier nor any kind of customs post, but only a tiny round notice-board by the roadside, requesting the traveller to pull up for customs inspection; and as this was written in Persian, and in Arabic script at that, we had simply passed by without noticing anything. So there was nothing for it but to cover the bumpy road once more, this time with a police escort, and to present ourselves for customs inspection.

The customs officer was by no means disposed to take us to task for our involuntary escapade, and engaged us in polite conversation in his careful and halting French, while he entered details of our place of origin, our destination, and the object of our journey in an enormous ledger. We then had to fill in some half-dozen forms concerning the details of our personal life and status, together with declarations of our holdings of foreign currency. At the same time he took the opportunity to exchange a sum of one hundred Turkish pounds, which we had brought with us, into Persian currency. This was, of course, entirely contrary to all the regulations, but we later discovered that the black-market rate which he had offered us was an unusually favourable one. Our luggage did not appear to interest him in the slightest. In any case, he said, we had been detained long enough, and he was very sorry that we had been so much inconvenienced.

But even so, we had not yet cleared the last of the obstacles which lay between us and Tabriz. The police authorities at Makou wanted to make quite sure that we had this time really fulfilled all our obligations. They provided us with a further endorsement of our passports in the shape of a large stamp imprint endorsed with the signature of the local police potentate. This latter involved some difficulty as the functionary concerned had by this time retired from the rococo pavilion and was having tea at his home, where our arrival caused some disturbance. The evening was drawing in by the time we drove out through the rocky gorge on to the Azerbaijan steppe. We passed through one mountain valley after another. Nothing grew around us, except for the occasional shrivelled clump of grass, and here and there a field of stunted corn. Villages were few and far between and one only noticed them when one was nearly there: with their brown or deep-red coloured houses which matched the soil around them, they were barely distinguishable from their surroundings. Houses without windows; smooth boxes whose outline is only broken by the door opening. Poverty-stricken and primitive, even in comparison with the mountain villages of Eastern Anatolia, where at least the school stands out from the monotonous background of huts. And yet these villages have a greater beauty of form, with their buildings intermingled with a natural artistry and surrounded by clay walls which mount imperceptibly and yet with a magical grace towards the mountain tops.

WHAT remains in my mind of the impressions of those first few days? Uniforms above all; controls, vigilant roadside posts; four pages of Persian stamp marks in my

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passport, all collected in the space of eight hours between Bazergan and Khoy; the dreamy gaze of the opium smoker with the delicate features, who plays at being a representative of the state during his waking hours; the broken-down roof-top of the frontier station, which seems to be nobody's concern—somehow all this belongs together. And with it, too, belong the windowless peasant huts of the steppes retiring behind their blank clay walls at sunset. It is all part of the picture of this country which is barely held together by the over-lavish and thoroughly muddled structure of its state machine.

It is above all the wealth of restrictions and controls which immediately strikes the foreign observer. Elsewhere, even in the Near East, the state may manifest its bureaucratic curiosity in the mass of forms with which it confronts the visitor at the border, but once the frontier posts are passed, one can count on being left undisturbed in one's further journeyings—as is the case in Europe. In Persia, even if one merely wants to travel in the vicinity of Teheran, to Isfahan perhaps, or to Shiraz on the Caspian sea, or to Khorasan, one has to have a special permit. The mere fact that one wants to travel instead of staying in one place, as all respectable citizens should, is enough to make one suspect.

The government official at Teheran who deals with the foreign press assured me with radiant confidence that no country in the world has more freedom that Persia. "In that case, why am I not allowed to travel wherever I like?" I asked him. He murmured something about enemy agents who have to be carefully watched, and about dangerous tribal leaders, and the dangerous times in which we live. All very well, but why should that mean that I have to get a permit even to photograph the most harmless street scenes in Teheran? Or that I am immediately challenged by the police if I point my camera (even with permission) at some individual sleeping by the roadside, or at a youth asking for baksheesh? He agreed that this was rather disturbing: "But then, you see, the police sometimes have their own view of these matters. And besides, there are still decrees from the time of Reza Shah which we have not had the time to repeal. In any case, it is really quite unfair that foreigners who come to this country always concentrate on taking pictures of poverty and backwardness. And besides . . ."

But still, as in the old Hapsburg empire, it is an absolutism tempered by muddle—muddle and corruption. The controls and restrictions are all-embracing but they are not always observed. There are strict controls on foreign currency transactions. But the exchange office makes no bones about paying the black-market rate for my foreign notes and shows no concern for passports or foreign currency declarations. On the other hand, at the National Bank the formalities over the exchange of a ten-dollar travellers' cheque occupy a full hour. An official of the customs authority gives me a long speech, telling me that I cannot on any account exchange currency anywhere except at the bank, and then immediately offers to exchange my Turkish pounds, "as a favour" of course. A foreign expert who is in charge of the reorganisation of the Persian traffic police tells me wearily that he finds it impossible to obtain convictions against offenders who break the traffic regulations. "I know perfectly well that when one of my men stops a motorist for dangerous driving, he only does it to get a baksheesh from the driver. And he is so miserably paid by the state that I cannot even reprimand him. What is one to do?"

Petty details? Perhaps. But they all point to one central fact, namely that the whole mighty edifice of the Persian state rests on a series of fictions. It is not often that one comes across so clear an example of the fundamental problem of the "under-developed" countries: the problem of a society which is not yet a state in the full sense of the word, because it lacks a universally binding system of order. The unnatural growth of the body of uniformed officials is none other than the symptom of an attempt—and a very inefficient attempt at that—to set some limit on the underlying anarchy, or at least, where this is only partially successful, to cover it up.

To be quite fair, one must point out that this is not a purely Persian phenomenon. It is part and parcel of the characteristic structure of all societies which are economically and socially backward but have emerged from the framework of their traditional laws and customs. I saw the same thing some twenty years ago in South America, while in the Arab countries there are plenty of similar instances even today. Before the war they were common enough among Balkan countries, of which Rumania was perhaps the classic example. All these countries suffered, or still suffer, from the lack of a more or less honest, more or less reliable, and more

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or less capable administration. And this deficiency is much more serious than any lack of perfection in the structure of their laws.

Persia, too, has plenty of good, or at least well-meant laws. There is no lack of regulations restricting the employment of children, but among the demonstrating crowds which can be seen marching through Teheran or Isfahan there are boys and girls of seven or eight years of age who have come straight from the factory, and nobody shows the slightest concern. Even today, land ownership in Persia is practically free of tax; not because such exemption is provided for in the laws, but because there is not a single official who would risk the displeasure of an influential landowner. None of them would have the courage to present the local landlord with a request for payment, or to pursue the matter if such a request were simply ignored. Instead, the general practice is to certify that the tax has been paid, in return for a small tip.

THIS last example is an instance of the fact that the weakness of the administration is no isolated phenomenon but reflects the weakness of the whole state machine: its dependence on sectional power groups, its subjection to the demands of a social oligarchy. Outspoken Persians, including those who themselves belong to this oligarchy, generally sum up all these phenomena under the term, "feudalism." One may doubt whether such a formulation is strictly correct, but that is not really the issue. The word "feudalism" certainly evokes the correct associations: the lack of any overriding authority and the absence of a central political mechanism, the splitting up of the actual centres of power and their engrossment in private hands, a division of society between a small group who hold the land and the power and a large mass of dependent subjects.

Does that sound too abstract? Let us be more concrete. The landowner from Azerbaijan whom I met in his office in Teheran will serve as the living example. Twenty-eight years of age, he belongs to the younger generation among the leading families, who are inclined, in the manner of youthful offspring of oligarchies throughout the world, to enthuse about reforms, and who may even at times show their "open-mindedness" by admitting that there is something to be said for Communism. But he has one advantage over his fellows in the same age and class group: his idealism may be somewhat nebulous but it has not obscured his view of the actual state of affairs in Persia, which is clear and objective—though perhaps a little cynical. The facts are as follows. He owns, as head of the family (his father died a few years ago), about sixty villages in the north-western corner of Persia. In addition, he holds several mining concessions in the southern part of the country, of which only a part are at present exploited. Sixty villages? He laughs at my incredulous question. "As a matter of fact I am only small fry among the members of my class. There are several who count their villages in hundreds. . . ." All this property is not cultivated in the form of large-scale estates but is let out to the peasants. Not a single member of his somewhat numerous family is actually resident on the land. The collection of rents, the supervision of irrigation facilities, and the care of the draft cattle and tools which are on loan to the poorer peasants, is left in each group of villages to a bailiff, who shares in the receipts. ("Other landowners simply sell the rent collection to the highest bidder, but that has never been done in our family.")

My friend assures me that he would very much like to do something for "his" peasants. Within the bounds of practical possibility he is already doing his best. But if he went further than is proper for a "liberal" landlord, then he would have his family and his bailiff and the landowners on neighbouring estates to contend with. The family is in any case rather a burden. "There is, for example, my uncle. I have packed him off to parliament, but he is so reactionary. . . . I think next time I will put myself up instead." Sent him to parliament? I enquire how this is done. Do the peasants automatically vote for the candidate proposed by the landlord? "Oh," he says, "who is going to ask the peasants? On my land everything belongs to me—including the police. And the police will see to it that my candidate is elected."

SO that is how it is. On paper Persia is a constitutional monarchy, or even a parliamentary democracy, and it has been such ever since the day of the revolution of 1906 when the "people"—represented in the main by the traders of the Teheran bazaars—forced the Shah to grant them a constitution. This constitution is still in force, although one or two points have been altered. It survived the revival of

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absolutism under the "enlightened despot" Reza Shah who attempted in the years between the wars to modernise Persia by a severe and indeed brutal régime, modelled on that of Kemal Ataturk. Little remains of this interlude. A railway from the Caspian Sea to the Persian Gulf, a few factories, a number of elaborate buildings in the Achamenidic neo-classical style, and the heavy burden of the indirect taxes and state monopolies by means of which the cost of these enterprises was extracted from the people.

The same constitution was used under his well-meaning and cultured young successor, after the expulsion of the enlightened despot, as the instrument of the oligarchy which fought out its battles between rival cliques in the orientalised palace of the Majlis. Again, this same constitution served as a brief for the pseudo-revolutionary pseudo-dictatorship of Mossadegh. Its connection with reality was equally non-existent under all these régimes.

But what, in fact, is this reality? The structure of Persian politics (or perhaps one should call it "the current version of the constitution") is a most complex thing. It is the outcome of a multiplicity of different influences which interact upon each other and which determine, at any given moment, who actually "owns" the state. At different times the dominant force may be the army, the oligarchy, the bureaucracy, or the "people." They all have their place in this complex of influences. The outstanding feature of Persian development in recent years has been the series of cataclysmic upheavals which have marked the repeated changes in the relative position of these social forces.

Parliament in Persia is essentially a body representing the landowning families, either directly or through their friends and relatives. Together with these there are a number of prosperous merchants and big financiers who are themselves often connected with the landowning class, and a few popular tribunes of the traditional and religious, or modern-liberal variety, who represent the reform movement in the cities. In theory the Majlis is virtually omnipotent; its power being limited only by the balancing force of the monarchy, and—as may be expected in an Islam country—by the authority of the religious teachers who watch over the conformity of legislation with the teachings of the Koran (which may or may not be an important factor, according to the prevailing circumstances). In practice, however, the power of the Majlis is only felt when the prevailing régime is weak. As soon as a strong prime minister comes to the fore—strong, that is, by virtue of his standing with the court and the army, or because he commands the confidence of the masses, or of some other powerful element outside parliament—then the relative strengths are immediately reversed and the Majlis becomes a helpless instrument of the executive. This situation continues so long as the administration is willing and able to use the power which it derives from extra-parliamentary sources.

In 1951, when Mossadegh was entrusted with the forming of a cabinet, he could count on the support of no more than six of the deputies, who were members of his "National Front" (in itself by no means a united body). But what did that matter, so long as he could always count on being able to summon some 100,000 demonstrators on to the Baharistan Square, under whose threatening shouts parliament would meekly ratify any measure proposed by the administration? This is the inevitable outcome of a bogus parliamentary system which represents nothing more nor less than a number of disorganised private pressure groups among a small upper class. There are in Persia, apart from the Communists, no real parties; the groups that go by that name are no more than accidental associations of deputies which are formed one day and dissolved the next. In the Majlis there is never a stable majority. The self-same parliament will on one occasion support a particular policy, only to support its diametric opposite on the next. And this is so simply because there are no fixed political systems or organisations, but only individuals, whose isolation renders them powerless, and therefore compels them to come to terms with anyone who happens to be able to rely on some centre of organised power.

All this is an old game. No one was more acute in seeing through it and more persistent in denouncing it than old Mossadegh himself, in the days when he was still in seemingly permanent opposition; hovering on the edge of Persian politics as the great incorruptible. Year by year, with infinite patience, he made political capital out of his indisputable personal integrity by exploiting its scarcity value in a society where such purity is extremely

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rare. But no one, also, mastered this game more completely than this same Mossadegh, once the prevailing anti-British feeling and the terror campaign of the political-religious secret societies had brought him into power.

However, this very example is itself an indication of the fact that the old game of state intrigue has undergone a fundamental change in the course of recent years. A new social element has entered the arena and has pushed itself forward into the company of the old participants: the court, the oligarchy, the parliamentary cliques, and the army. This new factor is the people. Mossadegh was not the first Persian prime minister whose power was rooted in the masses; nor is he likely to be the last. The old landowner and descendant of the former dynasty of the Ghajars achieved what none of his predecessors was ever able to do, namely to obtain a popular basis of authority. And this is in spite of the fact that among Persian politicians he was outstanding for his complete lack of the "common touch."

I have made several attempts to discover what was the secret of his power. The only explanation which sounded at all convincing was given me by a clever Persian intellectual: "You see," he said, "Mossadegh was not a politician, but one possessed; an *illuminé*—a sort of secular dervish. That makes an impression on this people, which has no understanding of your rational European thinking, but is thoroughly imbued with mysticism. Do you know the Shia, our Persianised and heretical version of Islam? Then you must know how much this religion is inspired by the expectation of the coming of the Mahdi, the Saviour, who will come one day to complete the work of the prophets. Mossadegh was, in the eyes of the people, a sort of national and political version of the Mahdi."

Perhaps all this is somewhat exaggerated. And yet I think that this explanation comes nearer than any other to the real state of affairs. I think of that banal print that could be seen, not long ago, on the walls of a tea house in the little town of Zanjan between Tabriz and Teheran, hanging over the samovar, and picturing in bloodthirsty and primitive fashion the events of the rising of July 21st, 1952. Over the top of dying women rode vicious-looking tanks shooting in all directions; workers were storming forward and agitators gesticulating violently, and over it all floated the head of Mossadegh, sorrowing and holy, suffering but kindly: the face of a Messiah.

The 21st July (30th Tir in the Persian calendar) was undoubtedly a revolution. But it was a Persian revolution; without form or sense of direction. A revolution that failed. Even before he was overthrown, most of the old comrades of Mossadegh in that battle were in bitter opposition to his régime. It became lonely around this man whose name was on the lips of many hundreds of thousands on that 30th Tir. The religious enthusiasts, the nationalist demagogues, and the social reformers gradually deserted him. With one exception—the Communists.

WHAT happened under Mossadegh is what the Communists knew would happen, namely, that the expulsion of the English did not at all improve the position of the masses, but on the contrary worsened it; that the Persian economy moved towards a state of collapse; that the state became bankrupt, and had to try to conceal its bankruptcy with the issue of an ever-mounting volume of bank notes; that prices rose and taxes also; that a dull dissatisfaction and disappointment filled the masses; that poverty and misery and disappointed hopes were driving more and more people into the arms of the Communists. For Communism, more than any other movement, stands for opposition; and that means surely, that everything is going to be quite different....

Even while engaging in street brawls with pro-Mossadegh nationalists, the Communists supported the régime in its suicidal anti-Western policies, and the more it became isolated and unpopular, the more they supported it. In doing so, they drove it on into ever new adventures, into conflict with parliament, into conflict with the Shah, into conflict with America. All that was part of the Tudeh tactics: there were no revolutionary slogans, no rebellious incitements to the overthrow of the government, no threat of a *coup d'état*. The Tudeh leaders had not the slightest intention of running up against the police or the army; they knew very well that, strong as they were, they were too weak for that. They concentrated their efforts on making sure that Persia was never at rest; that Mossadegh never dared to make an end of the oil dispute by accepting some form of compromise; that the creeping impoverishment was not brought to an end;

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and that, in the meantime, quietly and unobtrusively, Communist supporters were working their way into all the key positions.

The Tudeh problem has many aspects. Tudeh means "masses" and the party is in fact a truly "mass" party—and as such exceptional among the Communist parties in the Near East. What is more, it is a genuine workers' party. Two-thirds of its illegal membership are either in industry or with the railways or employed in some other part of the transport system. In this connection, one must never forget that although there are in Persia at the most only about a quarter of a million industrial workers, they form an élite. In a country where industry has only recently developed, it is usually the brighter and more enlightened young men and women who find their way into the factories and workshops. Under such conditions, "proletarisation" is at least as much an upward as a downward movement.

But there is another side of Tudeh; to the uprooted intelligentsia of Persia, membership in the Communist party means a new sense of personal status and of community with others, which the faith of Islam is no longer able to offer them. At least half of all the students in Teheran are subject to Communist influence, either by way of the Marxist study circles which plough their way through the *Communist Manifesto*, through Stalin's *Problems of Leninism* and the *Short History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*; or *via* the pseudo-Communist organisations, such as the "Committees for the Suppression of Illiteracy," which command the support of "progressive" students. Among the professors, I am assured, the picture is not very different. In addition, there has been the Tudeh infiltration into the machinery of the state, through secret members of the party or through fellow-travellers.

It is true, of course, that economic ills and Marxist dialectics cannot by themselves account for the relative success of Tudeh. But one has to allow—in Persia, as everywhere in the Orient—for the fascination exerted by the Russian example. Was not Tsarist Russia also an underdeveloped, decayed, corrupt, and essentially feeble state? And did not the Bolshevik movement demonstrate how, through a revolutionary uprising, such a state could pull itself out of the mud by its own shoe-strings, on the model of Münchausen? (And nobody is more inclined toward Münchausen escapades than the Oriental in general and the Persian in particular, with his deep inborn tendency towards exaggeration, and his sovereign contempt for practical reality.) It is just the intellectual, who has been educated in the West and who has brought back from there a nagging conviction of hopeless national inferiority, who is so easily influenced by such short-cut arguments. The consciousness of their own weakness makes the Persians admire hardness and brute force, which holds out the promise of release from their traditional curse of national dissolution and dreamy decay.

And so we come to the ultimate factor which lies at the back of all others. The wholly irrational and for that very reason elemental and powerful hostility against the West: a mixture of hatred and love for that Western civilisation which is at the same time admired and despised; which is copied and at the same time rejected. Could there be a better means of embodying this conflicting set of emotions in a political form than to throw oneself into the arms of Bolshevism, which is, after all, just another Asianised product of the West turned against the place of its own origin? "After all, the Russians are Asiatics, just as we are." How often I have heard that sentence!

WHAT now—now that Mossadegh is in a military prison; now that his one-time friend and later bitter opponent, Fazlollah Zahedi, rules supreme at the head of what amounts to a military dictatorship, and tries to cope with the sad legacy of two and a half years of economic mismanagement; now that the agents of Tudeh and the adherents of Mossadegh are alike ejected from their ministerial posts and hunted by a suddenly wide-awake police into the very recesses of their hiding places? Has there been a basic change?

It would take a bold man to answer with a quick affirmative. Just because Tudeh is hunted by the police, it is still far from having lost its influence on the masses or on the intelligentsia. Just because the military now set the tone, Persia has not by any means developed overnight into a country with an effective administration. Just because the government is now telling the people the truth about the national finances, there is no reason to believe that either the Persian worker, or the small trader, or the overwhelming mass of dependent peasants, are thereby made one jot more prosperous. Merely

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because there is at the moment an authoritarian régime, there is still no reason for thinking that the Persian state suddenly possesses effective authority.

The Zahedi régime may have a better chance of solving these problems. But first of all it will have to be able to maintain itself in power. And if it tries to do that with the help of indispensable foreign aid, then it will be confronted at once with the same well-nigh insoluble problem which proved the undoing of its predecessor. The issue is still the same: how can one make an end of the oil dispute, which threatens to stifle the Persian economy, and at the same time avoid giving the impression among the people that one is betraying Persia's national aspirations and capitulating in the face of Western "imperialism." Mossadegh, too, sought in vain for the means of squaring this circle. But he failed to find it. He did not dare to arrive at a compromise with England, lest he should loose the confidence of the masses—but by refusing to accept a compromise he opened the way to the ruin of the Persian economy, which in the end cost him the support of the masses. In the end he had to rely entirely on the support of the police and the armed forces, until even that was taken from him. For the time being, Zahedi is equally dependent on military force. Perhaps his position is nevertheless firmer: thanks to the support of the Shah his control of the army is likely to be more secure than that which Mossadegh thought he could exercise. But even that would not be a solution—at best it could only be the starting point of efforts to find one.

It seems at the moment that Zahedi has succeeded in checkmating the Tudeh organisation—for the time being at any rate, and to a limited extent. That is certainly an achievement. But at the same time he has opened up new political possibilities for Tudeh, since he has necessarily forced the supporters of Mossadegh into a united front with Moscow, which they were hitherto reluctant to enter. Police prosecutions can never overcome the Communist danger: least of all in a country like Persia. At the most one can hope to create the conditions necessary for the development of measures which will set up against Communism the rival attraction of a competing ideal, and will gradually win over its supporters through the persuasive power of concrete achievements.

And there are, in the recent statements of members of the new régime, indications that at least the beginnings of such a policy do exist. For example, when Zahedi's finance minister, Amini, announces the introduction of more severe measures to ensure the collections of taxes from landowners; or when the Shah speaks of a "more radical" resumption of the programme of redistribution of landed property in favour of the peasants, which Mossadegh shortsightedly obstructed; or when there is talk of a radical reform of the Persian system of administration. Reform of the taxes, reform of the property laws, reform of the administration—that is certainly a programme, or at least the outline of a programme, which faces up to the central problems of the Persian state. It is true that Mossadegh took one or two initial steps in this direction after July 21st, 1952, but he never really made a start, and the whole programme faded away without any concrete results.

One may ask whether the same thing is about to happen again; and certainly, that is a question to which the answer cannot be given merely on the basis of good intentions. It is also, in all probability, more than a purely Persian problem; the fall of Mossadegh amounts to a challenge (in the sense conceived by Toynbee) to the statesmanship of the Western Powers. Matters have now reached such a pass that Persia cannot possibly emerge from the mire, and from the prospect of chaos, by her own strength alone. She needs help—plenty of help. Dollars alone, which can barely suffice to fill even the larger holes in the state treasury, are not enough: least of all dollars offered in a mood of panic and without proper consideration of the conditions which should govern their expenditure. What is needed is a clear conception of the way in which the Persian economy can be put back into working order and then established on a viable basis. Everything now turns on the ability of the West to muster politicians who have the imagination to draw up such a programme, correctly suited to Persian conditions, and diplomats who could put over the programme to the Persian government and people without arousing their ingrained fear of the return of a new imperialism in a more subtle form. Upon the success or failure of the West in these two key-tasks will depend the fate of the Zahedi experiment.

F. R. Allemann

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Comment

"ASIA": DOES IT EXIST?

In the course of a recent journey through Southern and Eastern Asia, one fact insistently pressed itself upon my attention: that part of the world which goes by the name of Asia has no real coherent existence—it is a geographical but not a cultural unit. The villages of Japan have far more in common with those of Denmark than with those of India. The Mohammedan of Karachi is much closer to his co-worshipper in Egypt than to his Hindu neighbour in Bombay. The concept "Asia" is a figment of the Western mind, which has little connection with reality—even when used by Asian statesmen.

This statement may perhaps be challenged on the ground that "Europe" is also no more than a geographical concept. But there is a fundamental difference. Europe retains its essential unity in spite of national divisions and local contrasts. It does so by virtue of the cultural heritage which is shared by all European peoples: the longing for European union has deep-rooted origins in the realm of ideas, as well as in that of practical problems. An educated European is a man whose cultural background embraces the whole European tradition, and who feels himself a part of a European community of ideas which commands his loyalty and affection. And this is so, irrespective of whether he belongs to the Middle Ages, to the Renaissance, to the period of Voltaire, or to that of Goethe, Croce, Toynbee, or Ortega.

In contrast, it can fairly be said that not one of the leading personalities of the Asian world can claim to possess a viewpoint which would embrace all the Asian civilisations. One evening in Bombay, I met the outstanding Japanese writer, Kyo Komatsu, in the company of a group of Indian writers. With the exception of Gandhi's autobiography, Komatsu had not read a single book by an Indian author. And even his appreciation of Gandhi—a fellow "activist"—was not exactly intimate. He talked first about recent developments in Japanese literature and then about Malraux, Camus, Orwell, and Hemingway. It was soon evident that the only common topic of conversation between Japanese and Indian was the work of Western writers. I spent most of the evening acting as interpreter between the Japanese (who spoke French) and the Indians (who spoke English).

On another occasion, I spent an afternoon at Madras in the company of the leading writers in the Telugu and Tamil languages. I later discovered that these writers, who were of outstanding calibre, were almost unknown among Maharati, Bengali, Hindu, Urdu, or Gujarati literary circles. In fact, the educated Indian only knows of the work of writers outside his own community in so far as it has been translated into English—the common language of independent India. For the most part, he is far better versed in English than in Indian literature.

In Siam and Burma there is even clearer evidence of these two parallel tendencies in the outlook of educated Asians; on the one hand, the return to the narrow—if deep—cultural traditions of their own community, and on the other, the urge towards the acceptance of Western literature. Sometimes these two movements combine in a strange fashion. In Siam there is a literary cult of the writing of legends, fables, and epic poems, based on the national folklore; one of the leading exponents of this school, Prince Prem Burachatra, prefers to write his country's folklore in the English or French language, because he feels more at home in the Western tongue. Again, it is a remarkable fact that the centre of literary life in Burma is the "Translation Society" where works by foreign authors, and in particular those from the Western countries, are translated into the Burmese language; it is the activity of these translators which has played a

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major part in transforming the Burmese language into a modern literary medium.

In Ceylon, I was present at an animated discussion in the seminary at Colombo on the subject of the re-establishment of the Singhalese and Tamil languages in place of English. The return to the mother tongue as the language of literature offers enormous advantages, particularly because it gives scope for the creation of new forms of expression, which are not likely to take root in a foreign language, even if it is perfectly known. But in Ceylon this return has the grave disadvantage that it brings to the fore the profound differences which exist between the indigenous languages: it creates a risk of mutual isolation, and consequently of the collapse of cultural life among the Singhalese and Tamil populations.

The tendency of each of the Asian peoples to return to its native heritage of religion, customs, and literature, together with a general readiness to accept the standards of literary accomplishment embodied in the work of the great Western authors, seems to leave no room for the development of a genuine cultural community in Asia. Interest in world literature, which is extremely strong in Asia, is almost exclusively limited to the literature of the European countries. In this respect, literature occupies a unique position, for European music arouses no interest, except in Japan, and European painting only interests the Asian artists living in Paris.

CONTEMPORARY Western authors provide the cultural background of the educated classes in Asia. In Japan, more than fifty thousand copies of Camus's novel, *The Plague*, were sold in a few months. In Tokyo, the students cried in the streets when they heard that André Gide had died. In Pakistan, T. S. Eliot is just as famous as in England. In Calcutta, the director of a theatre asked me whether it would be possible to obtain the rights for a performance of the latest play by Sartre. Russian literature is accepted as part of the common fund of Western culture. The great Russian story-tellers, from Gogol to Gorki, are read everywhere, and their influence is as strong as it is widespread. Even contemporary Russian literature, which is, on the whole, not in the first rank of contemporary writing, is regarded by educated Asians as part of Western literature. The only breach in this universal preference for Western culture has been made by the impact of contemporary Chinese writing on Japan; but the Eastern part of Asia has in any case a degree of cultural unity absent from the rest of this vast continent.

Even the revolt against the West and against the hegemony of Western countries is itself linked to the assimilation of Western ideas. Their modernity is valued as an instrument of progress. A local judge at Lahore told me, with a wealth of detail, of his studies of the writings of Russell, Dewey, and Sartre. His view was: "I concentrate on studying Western authors because they are useful in our work of social progress. As for our own writers, I read them for pleasure, but with no sense of purpose."

In the last resort it is the power of local tradition which is the determining cause of the absence of any unifying "Asian" consciousness. For seven hundred years, Indians and Mohammedans have lived together side by side. But as soon as external compulsion was removed, two new and different countries inexorably took shape. Even the existence of a common bond among the inhabitants of continental India is a remote prospect, and the possibility of a common basis of life between continental India and Ceylon is absolutely inconceivable—in spite of their membership in the Commonwealth, that sole supra-national link which is still a living force in Asia.

The strongest common cultural bond in Asia is Buddhism. A large part of Asia, which is dominated by Buddhism, could form a truly united cultural community. But in the new states that have grown up in Asia, the religious element has been hardly more significant than it was in the case of the national states which were formed in 19th century Europe. It is possible that devotion to Buddhism may succeed in limiting nationalist passions more effectively than did Christianity in Europe. In any case, one may hope that Asia will be able to assimilate Western influences and experiences without repeating all Western mistakes, and especially without taking as their model a Balkanised Europe. The break-up of the British Empire has about the same significance for contemporary Asia as did the break-up of the Hapsburg Monarchy for Europe. The disappearance of this over-riding unifying power has created a void, and communalism, Communism, and petty fanaticisms of all kinds are rushing in to fill the gap.

François Bondy

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"TRIESTE A NOI!" — "TRST YE NASE!"

IT REALLY seems as if the era of the Cold War had come to an end, the shades of catastrophe had fled, and the good old days were with us once again. Looking at the illustrated papers, one has seen a spectacle that one had, with a sigh, long ago taken leave of: more or less grown-up people demonstrating with enormous enthusiasm in favour of a patriotic cause, flags waved with exemplary indignation, windows and noses copiously broken, and from all sides the deafening shouts: "*Trieste a noi!*" or "*Trst ye nase!*"

To the adolescent of Bologna or Milan, of Nish or Skolpje, life will not be worth living until Trieste "belongs" to them. But what would they do with Trieste if they got it, and what was lacking in their lives while they were deprived of it?

It is true that man does not live by bread alone. He needs higher ideals for which he can shout or—better still, apparently—brawl. And a higher ideal than this is inconceivable. "*Trst ye nase!*" "*Trieste a noi!*" "*To the gallows with Tito!*" "*Death to Pella!*" "*Avanti!*" On both sides of "Zone A" we have seen the mobilisation of Italian and Yugoslav divisions, both of them equipped with the same American tanks and guns: those expensive toys which were given to them by Uncle Sam for defence against the big bad Russian wolf, who seems, for the time being, to have been forgotten. We have seen them digging themselves in, putting up barbed wire and field telephones, building their fortifications and command posts. The battleground for this skirmish is indeed well chosen: it is one of those demarcation lines which were so fashionable in 1945, running between Trieste and the hinterland, straight across the fields and slap through the middle of the churchyard at Gorizia. On both sides of the line one feels the impatience of the contestants with those tiresome Americans and Britons. As soon as they go, the battle can begin in earnest. "All is prepared . . ." ". . . the truly Italian character of Trieste will be attested without blood. . . ." "We will not allow Yugoslavia to be degraded to the level of the Italians. . . ." "Our blood brothers. . . ." And now that matters have gone so far there is, of course, no turning back. It is a question of prestige: the prestige of one's country and of all that one holds dear.

But what do the Italians propose to do with this eccentric little port on the northern end of the Adriatic, which has no Italian hinterland whatever? Or what should the Yugoslavs do with it? During the twenty-five years between the wars, when Trieste, for the first time in its history, belonged to Italy, it was a dying town, and grass grew on the piers. It seems more than probable that, under Tito, the grass would grow even more profusely. Under the British-American occupation, Trieste was at least a military post and trans-shipment centre, an international meeting ground for all sorts of smuggling and foreign-exchange transactions, and a haven for refugees. It was a little Tangier; a golden opportunity for a town which had lost its true reason for existence. For Trieste is neither Italian nor Slav in origin, it is essentially a memorial to the old Hapsburg monarchy. In that conglomeration of nationalities, it was natural that there should be an Austrian port populated by Italians and situated on Slovenian soil. It was the Danube countries' outlet to the Mediterranean, and it remained as the open door of a broken-down structure after the rest of the framework had been destroyed by a rabid nationalism.

"I am well aware that there are Italian settlements in the coastal towns of Istria and Dalmatia," wrote Cavour in 1860 to an Italian deputy who was urging a declaration in favour of the annexation of Trieste. "But I would think it utterly pointless to embroil ourselves with the Croatians, the Serbs, the Hungarians and the whole German people, merely in order to lay claim to a territory which constitutes the only access to the Mediterranean for a large part of Europe." That was written in those backward days which are described in the history books as "the era of nationalism." Since then there has been an irresistible advance in the march of progress, and of that "large part of Europe" which constituted the hinterland of Trieste in the time of Cavour there remains today no more than a heap of rubble. So that now it is really hard to see what use Trieste could be to anybody—except, perhaps, as a pretext for a fight.

Trieste is, admittedly, a town populated by Italians. The Italians are a fertile people, they have settled along all the eastern coast-line of the Adriatic, and apart from Trieste there are Italian settlements in Pola, Fiume, Zara, and

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Split. As a consequence, there arose d'Annunzio and his "Roman legion," screaming for Fiume, Zara, and Corfu, and then, later, the cry of Fascism for an "Italian" Tunis, Corsica, and Nice. But the rule of Fascism and its policy of Italianisation in the occupied territories is only too fresh in memory, and it has left a legacy of bitter hatred. The Slovenes had their hour of bloody revenge in 1945, in the "forty days of Trieste." At that time there was a mass migration of Italians out of Istria, and now they in their turn are crying for revenge. This game is to go on presumably until the confused intermingling of "Slav" and "Latin" peoples is one day finally and brutally disentangled by the well-tried methods of deportation and extermination. Then the grass may at last grow quite without restraint in the streets of Trieste.

Herbert Luthy

THE COMMUNIST CRISIS

IN VIEW of certain facts now officially acknowledged about the standard of life in the Soviet Union, is it not time that someone (Mr. John Strachey, perhaps?) wrote a book on "The Nature of the Communist Crisis"? To learn from the mouths of Khrustschev and Malenkov that, after 35 years of Soviet rule, agriculture has hardly progressed at all, cattle-breeding is at about the level of 1914, the production of meat, milk, and vegetables has actually been falling during the last years, that milk consumption per head is now something like 50 litres per year—how curiously this affects the notion that, whatever the deficiencies of the Soviet system, at least it has a secret connection with something called "economic progress"! And how nasty a temptation it offers to speculate on, for instance, Soviet housing, about which we know very little but can suspect much!

To be sure, the Soviet revelations went hand in hand with the proclamation of a new "line" for agriculture that is supposed to transform the situation, quickly and marvellously. But will it? Answering this question is not made any easier by the fact that—aside from some gestures in the direction of "self-interest" and "monetary incentives"—the new line is nowhere clearly drawn, but presents itself as a hotch-potch of many measures, some ambiguously stated, some only implied. Actually, despite an enormous number of words and a welter of new "decisions," the outlines of the new policy are not yet clear at all. Perhaps not even to its authors.

Indeed, there are certain bits of evidence which make one doubt whether the whole campaign is to be taken seriously. The first of these appears in the original statements by Malenkov and Khrustschev. These reveal upon a close reading that, while a gigantic increase of cattle-breeding and dairy-farming is envisaged, an equally gigantic increase is required in potato- and vegetable-growing. And on top of that, cereal output is also supposed to grow! In an organically growing agricultural economy, these various aspects do of course fit into one another, but only on the basis of gradual progress and reciprocal adjustments. If undertaken simultaneously, and at top speed, they cancel one another out. But it is precisely top speed which is being demanded, and it is this absurd demand which is at the root of the price increases now promised for meat, milk, etc. These increases represent a multiple of the present prices, and any agricultural expert will concede that production cannot be stimulated in that way. In an orderly agriculture, very small additional price stimuli in a given direction are quite capable of producing a considerable shift in the choice of crops: but a sudden, total reversal of the agricultural price system will either produce no result at all, or it will make the existing muddle worse. To this, moreover, must be added Khrustschev's fantastic statement foreseeing a complete revolution of agriculture within "the next two or three years." Cereal production can of course be so revolutionised, given favourable topographical, geological, and climatic conditions, and if adequate capital investment is made for the purpose of mechanisation. But cattle-

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breeding and dairy-farming, depending as they do upon the intelligence, judgement, and skill of the individual farmer, just cannot be revolutionised in this way. Denmark, Switzerland, Holland, New Zealand, the model countries in this field, have all proved that a real improvement of technique is a matter of decades and can only be achieved under peaceful and stable conditions. Wild alterations of prices cannot help in the least, but on the contrary tempt the peasant to abandon all care for improvements in order to sell inferior produce quickly.

The contradictions inherent in the new "line" raise the problem of its motives. Of course, the pressure for a tremendous increase in agricultural deliveries at short notice is rational enough in *economic* terms, since—as we now know—the average Soviet citizen is miserably supplied with food. But economic need is not a decisive incentive in the Communist system. The situation has no doubt deteriorated in comparison with 1950, but is still much better than in 1945, and does not seem to differ, by and large, from that of 1914. The Soviet citizen, helpless victim of his government, has had to bear it so long—why then the sudden urge to improve his condition? It seems clear that the Soviet government finds itself under internal *political* pressures from which it cannot any longer escape.

The character of these pressures is carefully concealed by the government, but it is not difficult to surmise that they are basically of two kinds. There is first the pressure of those who are underfed, that is, the industrial workers and the *kolkhozniki* themselves. But the Soviet government would never listen to their grievances were it not for the intervention of another force, composed of the new non-party upper classes, for which the industrial managers and the army are the spokesmen. The managers are naturally interested in, among other things, the living standards of their labour force. The army has a peasant majority of soldiers whom it wants to keep content. And in the case of the army, at least, there is no doubt that the Soviet régime cannot any longer simply turn a deaf ear.

WHAT was never openly admitted by the Soviets, but what could be inferred cogently from certain symptoms, is now, after the latest announcements, entirely clear: peasant disaffection with the Soviet régime has continuously expressed itself in resistance to production, always the Achilles heel of the Soviet system. The reasons for this resistance are political rather than economic. There is absolutely no reason why grain should not be grown in the Russian plains on large estates —though dairy farming cannot so easily be subjected to that system—provided only that the peasant would accept that system as his own, as something in which he has a stake. That is what is lacking. The *kolkhoznik*, the member of the collective farm, slaughtered his cattle when he was forced to enter the *kolkhozi*, and ever since has treated them, not as collective enterprises, but as jails from which he cannot escape. No specific economic incentives will help much unless new policies are applied to eradicate or overcome the peasant's hatred for the *kolkhoz* system as such.

What policies? The degree of acuteness of the problem became apparent when, in 1951, Khrustschev made the staggering suggestion to destroy all existing villages and to concentrate the peasants in *agrogorody*, giant agrarian towns, where they would live in rented flats under the supervision of the MVD. It was a piece of absolute madness, since its first result would have been to throw the countryside into a turmoil for several years, thus ensuring a famine —while Soviet building, incapable even of dealing with the fearful housing shortage in the towns, would certainly not rehouse some one hundred million peasants. The desperate character of the proposed remedy certainly reflected the anguish of the Soviet leaders who find themselves between the pressure for better food on the one hand, and the resistance of the peasants on the other.

What revealed itself in that impasse was the total failure of Stalin's collectivisation programme. The basic fact lurking behind the changing contortions of Soviet agricultural policy is the need to abandon the social structure created by Stalin. Things cannot remain where they are.

In this situation, Khrustschev's plan for *agrogorody*, though essentially absurd, lay in the direction hitherto travelled by Soviet Communism. The totalitarian system, unable to improve the living standards of the population, had "solved" the economically unsolvable problems on a political level, by breaking up every group capable of resistance. Lenin had at first envisaged a system of controlled private

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management, but when this collapsed almost immediately, proceeded to the destruction of the bourgeoisie. Stalin, facing the resistance of the peasantry in the 1920's, reacted by expropriating the individual peasant. Since this was ultimately ineffective, Khrustschev proposed to break up, in what would amount to a third revolution, the villages themselves. The effect of his proposal was only to increase to the boiling-point the internal conflicts within the party leadership. After it was rejected, certain people at the Soviet top decided that it was high time to make the engine go in reverse. One of these men we can now clearly identify: Beria. Another was presumably Malenkov, who fiercely attacked and derided the already defeated Khrustschev plan at the nineteenth party congress. (The partial parallelism between Beria's and Malenkov's views not unnaturally stimulated speculation that they were political friends, whereas, as other symptoms at the time already indicated, they were in fact political competitors, racing one another in the attempt to profit from the widespread clamour for retreat and retrenchment.)

Yet, whereas the Khrustschev plan was stranded on the sheer technical impossibility of operating it, the policy of retreat, technically easy, involved political implications of the most unpredictable and far-reaching kind. A terroristic dictatorship soon discovers that it is not easy to retreat, a truth dramatically confirmed when, exactly a week after the announcement of such a retreat in East Germany, the people of that country rose in revolt. It was, to judge by what has happened since Beria's fall, about the feasible limits of such a retreat that Malenkov and Beria fell out.

Many observers in the West have been strangely reluctant to concede that the principle of collectivisation as such was involved in the struggle that ended with Beria's fall, or to admit that Beria's policy involved an abandonment of the principle of compulsory collectivisation, and thus a large-scale, if not complete, abandonment of collective agriculture. To call this "a return to capitalism" is a matter of taste, since the old sharp distinction between a "capitalist" and a "collectivist" economy is in any case obsolete. But a policy attempting to release millions of slave labourers, to reduce the function of the party to "education," to grant a measure of autonomy to the border regions, to carry out a vast retreat from agrarian collectivisation in the satellites, to abandon one-party government in East Germany, etc., was a truly revolutionary anti-Stalinist policy, and the demonstrative abandonment of the Stalin cult summed up symbolically the intention of Stalin's heirs to carry through a vast reversal of previous policies. That intention halted, in confusion and the purging of Beria, before the key problem of decollectivisation.

The basic situation, then, can be defined as an impasse whose existence is recognised by everybody, or nearly everybody who counts, but the remedies for which have been sought in two extreme and entirely incompatible ways by two hostile groups. Actually, however, both these groups have been defeated; Khrustschev in 1951 and Beria, in a much more decisive way, in 1953. Both radical solutions have been rejected, the Khrustschev plan as impracticable, the Beria plan as undermining the structure of Soviet Communism. The deadlock therefore remains, though all concerned know that it is strangling the Soviet economy and undermining the rule of the party.

In the light of this background, the recent official announcements appear as a patched-up compromise between incompatibles. A remnant of the Beria programme has been adopted in the form of premiums for private effort. A remnant of the original Khrustschev plan has been adopted in the form of an insistence on the political and economic strengthening of the Machine and Tractor Stations. The tenor is half Beria's (appeal to self-interest) half Khrustschev's (the all-round raising of immediate production targets). The execution of the plan has been entrusted, on the one hand to Khrustschev as the presidium member responsible for agriculture, but on the other hand to Benediktov as minister of agriculture, and Benediktov happens to be the man who attacked Khrustschev's original—and rejected—agrarian plan most bitterly. (It is this detail in the personnel set-up, crucial as always in decoding Soviet policies, which seems to ensure the correctness of the interpretation of the whole matter in terms of a compromise growing out of a stalemate.)

But is there really no hope of success for this patched-up compromise? Cannot the Soviet Union, which has gained unquestionable successes in the field of heavy industry, reap similar ones in the production of food and

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consumers goods by a concentrated effort in this field? The answer to this question involves the very fundamentals of Communism.

A simple statement will suffice to define that involvement: all of the economic successes of the Soviet Union, from the first Five Year Plan to atomic armament, whether accomplished by salaried labour or by slave labour—or, as was probably the case most frequently, by a combination of both—have been brought about by shock-work regardless of cost. Any country can start a gigantic armaments programme if it is willing to disregard the cost, let its population live without milk and meat, and with God knows how many persons per room. But these methods are ineffective for the increased production of mass-consumption goods. In the USSR, as in other parts of the world, mass-consumption does not simply presuppose the availability of great quantities of goods, but their availability at cheap prices, hence at cheap costs. And that is precisely what Communism cannot achieve.

Soviet production in any field is always extremely costly. That is demonstrated by the wide divergence of official progress reports and actual achievement. What is the reason for this divergence? The reply is as old as economic theory and is simply that what the Communists list as "production" is not at all production in "capitalist" (i.e. economic) terms. In countries like England, France, or the United States, by and large, production is what is saleable in the market, after having passed the test of price and quality competition. Nothing of the kind in the Soviet economy! There, everything which has been produced is "production" in a statistical sense. The erroneous location of a plant, for example, involving endless transport expenditure, does not appear as *faux frais*, but as so many more man-hours and carrying-service achieved by the railways: the shoes falling into rags, the practically uninhabitable houses, which at best should be assessed at a heavy discount below minimum prices, appear in the official statistics with all the exorbitant cost of their production. The disparity between official production figures and actual achievement reflects the huge economic waste involved in a system which has abandoned all effective market controls.

It is no one's fault if the argument against Soviet Communism as an economic system finally boils down to this truism. However, its banality to Western ears should not obscure the fact that the Soviet leaders are incapable of even thinking about it seriously: to do so would disrupt their whole Marxian *Weltanschauung*. They are therefore moving blindly, driven into impasses by forces they do not understand, exactly in the same way in which Marx believed the capitalist system was drifting, and in which it actually did operate to some extent in his own day. The late George Orwell was quite wrong when, in his last masterpiece, *1984*, he explained the misery spread by Communism as the result of a conscious design on the part of the leaders to suppress the masses economically, as a condition of suppressing them politically. The economic disasters brought about by Communism are not the result of unparalleled malice, but the consequences of an economic system in which its promoters believe. These consequences have been over-stressed by some economists who maintained that "the Communist system could not work." Any system can work, so long as it is not overthrown by political force. But basically the contention that a completely marketless industrial economy cannot work has been borne out, in the modified form that it can only work at the price of a giant disproportion between effort and result, as a vehicle of constant misery.

THE present Soviet price level is not simply an effect of rearmament, though rearmament certainly contributes to it. Even if there were no armaments at all, Communism would still continue to produce goods of inferior quality at a very high cost. The supply of consumer goods can, of course, be increased, but in contrast to the battle for armaments production, the battle for more and cheaper consumer goods can never really be won by the Communists. The shock-work methods now tentatively applied to agriculture will perhaps increase quantitative output somewhat, but this increase will be achieved at a tremendous rise in costs; it will increase, not decrease, the disproportion between effort and result in the Soviet economy, and therefore increase, both in a short and in a long term view, the burden on the Soviet population, without improving its living standard.

It may be that here we strike a basic law of all totalitarian structures of government, of which

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Communism is only the most extreme. If they turn so consistently to the development of basic industries and of armaments, and ultimately to military aggression, the explanation is not entirely psychological. It is also in part economic: these, since they can be pursued regardless of cost, are the only pursuits promising success.

Though it may sound paradoxical to many, it is nevertheless a fact that a Communist system turning its face towards the betterment of the condition of the average citizen is a contradiction in terms. The Soviet leaders are now trying to handle agriculture as they did the production of weapons. But the inexorable economic laws, whose validity Stalin so fervently asserted in his last work without understanding them in the least, will take effect "over their heads," in the most classical Hegelian-Marxian manner—will play with them, again in the most classical Marxian way, as if they were mere things incapable of understanding what is happening, and will in the not too distant future confront them with precisely the choice they now attempt to avoid: the choice between a third internal revolution which will destroy the peasantry and increase the general misery, or a vast retreat from the Communist system.

Franz Borkenau

TO A GIRL WHO DREAMT ABOUT A POEM

SOFTLY, beneath a scarcely trembling starlight,
A blue sleep rises and engulfs her bed.
That sweet intelligence, transfigured only,
Distils its music in the pillowed head.

The soft night air, through pastures of a legend,
Lets her unmoving body drift along
A tide of flutes. That clear imagination
Sways like a dancer to the unheard song.

But formal resonances of those lines
Arguing aspects of a view of art
Take up the ground-bass, their crude rhythms softened
To beat in concord with that sleeping heart.

And I ask her to believe no sort of praises
Could raise them further in the poet's esteem
Than if I honestly could think those verses
Deserved admittance to the gracious dream.

Robert Conquest

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Communications

ASIAN NATIONALISM

[The writer of the following letter is a leading Indian socialist. Since receiving this, we have learned that Mr. Mehta has been sentenced to sixteen months in prison for personally leading a group of landless peasants to occupy uncultivated land.—ED.]

SIR.—Professor Hugh Seton-Watson's review, in the first number of ENCOUNTER, of Mr. Panikkar's book, *Asia and Western Dominance*, describes him as "a distinguished writer, statesman, and diplomat." This is only a part of an adequate introduction to that gentleman. Since I write these lines in a court-room in Pardi, where I am being tried for leading a movement of the landless peasants, it is not possible for me to accomplish the detailed research necessary for a complete portrait of Mr. Panikkar. Suffice it to say that he is a man with a keen sense of history, who was a high official in the India of the Princes, is now the leading diplomat of free India, and will doubtless play a leading role in the India of the future.

The sun of the Western Powers has sunk in Asia, but the red star of Communism grows bigger every day. It is obviously just the right time to dissect and denounce Western dominance. . . .

But to turn from Mr. Panikkar to this question of Western dominance. In the 19th century, Western dominance evoked a two-fold reaction: one was a dazzlement with the achievements of the West and a desire to imitate it; the other was a turning to the past, a seeking for confidence in past glories. Most Asian countries are multi-group societies, and the various groups reacted in discontinuous rhythm: in India, for instance, when Hindus were pro-West, Muslims were in a traditionalist mood, by the time Hindus had come round to traditionalism, Muslims had swung to a pro-West position. . . . In the 20th century, the desire to imitate the West seems to have become the stronger in all groups. But any serious student of the realities of Southeast Asia knows that Western economy and technology are ill-suited to us. The chief attraction of Communism lies in the fact that it fosters the illusion that Asia can catch up and overtake the West. "The industrially developed country," wrote Marx, "only shows the less developed country the picture of its future." If Marx had cared to consult the great Indian, Dadabhai Naoroji, who was working at the same time in the British Museum on his classic work *Poverty and Unbritish Rule in India*, he would have learned that the industrial development of the West was like the picture of Dorian Gray: the ravages accumulated in the colonies. Today, Southeast Asia can save itself only by turning away from Western patterns of development and discovering its own appropriate patterns, where the *form* as well as the *degree* of innovation is variable.

Communism blocks this variation. In that, even more than in Russian imperialism, resides the terrible threat to the hapless millions of Asia. And therein continues the disastrous dominance of the West. . . .

ASOKA MEHTA

SIR.— . . . Mr. Panikkar has been on the track of Asian dominance in two previous books, when discussing how tiny forces of Europeans defeated Asian armies and subjugated Asian kingdoms. His answer to that question was sea-power. He went so far as to argue that the fall of the Mogul and Manchu empires was due to European sea-power. That seems obviously unsound, but it is no more unplausible than other attempts to explain the humiliating conquest of Asia by Europe in terms of technology.

The fact is that Europe had no significant technological advantage till the 19th century. The military superiority of the Europeans was due wholly to social and psychological factors. Mr. Seton-Watson to the contrary notwithstanding, the Europeans were at least quasi-nationalists before the French Revolution, whereas many of the Asians were not even patriots in any of the senses he allows. Down to the 18th century, Indian armies in battle would disperse at once on the death of the king, because their loyalty was directed towards him, or rather towards his divine attributes, which death proved him to have lost in favour of his victorious adversary. . . .

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All Asian societies were alike in living in their immemorial ritual community with nature; whereas Europeans even in the 17th century had behind them the Renaissance and all that went before it; they were not part of nature, but persons, against and above nature.

This, commonplace though it may be, is the most fundamental distinction marking off Asia from Euramerica—with Islam in a doubtful position in between. The masses of Asia still live and think in the old ways, but the intelligentsia have adopted a good deal of the outlook of the West. The gulf is indeed wide: it is a gap not of centuries but of millennia.

Needless to say, the intelligentsia are not happy about it. The most unhappy were the Chinese. . . . The revolution among the Chinese intelligentsia was, one would suppose, not primarily an acceptance of Marxism. It was a sudden revulsion against the West and a flight back to the bosom of the Chinese masses.

Similar trends are to be noticed in India. The Gandhists are, of course, tempted to go the Chinese way: this explains the recent anomaly of Communist Gandhism. There are others who see in the intelligentsia only rootlessness, but in the unemancipated peasant discover or imagine solidity and integrity. But contradictions abound in modern Indian life. Thus, the official nationalist-Gandhist-left policy is to encourage Hindi; but the unregenerate, that is the whole educated class in practice, insist privately on having their children taught English.

PHILIP SPRATT
Bangalore, India — Editor, *Mysindia*

THE DEATH PENALTY

SIR,—Almost two centuries ago it was thought that the deeply humane words of an Italian who rebelled against "the vain prodigality of torture, which has never led men to be better," would be enough to banish the death penalty and torture from the civilised world. Cesare Beccaria's inoffensive little work seemed on the point of winning the battle against the gallows. It was merely an illusion. Today, more than ever, the death penalty remains in force, in and outside Europe, in most so-called civilised states. . . .

. . . Talk of the dignity of the individual is heard everywhere; but can such words be sincere when the death penalty continues legally to exist? Can a society in which homicide is recognised as an act of justice, call itself civilised? Can anyone go on thinking that the irreparable harm caused by a murder can be rectified by a second murder, under the pretext that the latter takes place under the mantle of authority?

The argument round which Cesare Beccaria developed his exposition remains the least refutable: the vanity, the blind and senseless futility, of the death penalty. "*Un pendu n'est bon à rien,*" said Voltaire. What is the use of killing? What does it gain? What remedy does it bring?

The United Nations Bill of Human Rights provides for the right to live, but does not exclude the annihilation of a man by a sentence of death. So long as the violation of the right to live is held to be legitimate, any other violation of minor rights finds its justification.

Two centuries ago it was possible to believe that one lone voice would be enough to bring down the gallows of Europe. The moment has come when that voice should echo again. We should wake the voice, amplify it, until it becomes the voice of multitudes, the will of the peoples. As long as it is permissible to kill a man, humanity will not know peace. The fault does not lie with governments, nor with the judges or the executioners. The guilty are those who remain silent and accept the *fait accompli*. . . .

It is for this reason that this appeal is being broadcast. We hope to promote a vaster movement, along lines which can easily be worked out, provided we find, in Italy and elsewhere, friends as convinced as ourselves of the utility of such a movement, and willing to cooperate with us in its organisation.

E. E. AGNOLETTI — IGNAZIO SILONE
PIERO CALAMANDREI — B. TECCHI
NICOLA CHIAROMONTE — C. TUMIATI
FERRUCCIO PARRI — LIONELLO VENTURI

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BOOKS

LOVE AND LOYALTY

IT WOULD not be difficult to dismiss Mr. Forster's new book* with a few polite and commonplace remarks. It depends, of course, what one was expecting. The title, when it was first announced, seemed to hold out hopes; it looked as though the master, at long last, was going to give us a piece of new creative writing, and on this score I dare say many people will be disappointed. Superficially, *The Hill of Devi* is little more than a collection of old letters interspersed with occasional comments. But only superficially. There is an elusive quality about most of Mr. Forster's writing and in this book it is particularly easy to miss the point; indeed I am not at all sure that I myself have discovered it. Of course, it is beautifully written and a great deal of it is very funny; also it is very short, not much more than a hundred-and-fifty pages of pleasantly large type.

When I read it for the second time I happened to be in Geneva. There was as usual some sort of international conference in progress, and sitting in the hotel lobby I was surrounded by delegates: a few Chinese, grown cynical after long years of theoretical negotiation, some representatives from the countries of Southeast Asia, a lot of Japanese, aloof and over-formal with their faintly hissing manners, and many Indians. Mostly they sat about in groups, regarding one another with evident suspicion. Only the Indians seemed inclined to mix; but they too began to look frustrated when they found their efforts unrewarded. A lot of frozen faces; and despite the beauty of the autumn sunlight shimmering over the lake I too began to feel chilly and depressed. Perhaps, I thought, Geneva always was the wrong place for this sort of thing: it is a beautiful and a restful city, but the spirits of Calvin and John Knox still hover about the streets, and in some strange way they seem to exert a freezing effect upon human relationships. It was then that I began to see what Mr. Forster was driving at; something much more human than international understanding, more easily attainable: love and loyalty. This, then, is really a book about the need of personal relationships. At least that is how I see it.

IN 1912, when he was in his early thirties, Mr. Forster paid a short visit to India as a guest of the Maharaja of Dewas Senior. In those days Dewas was one of the so-called Native States of Central India, and although its affairs, like those of all the other States, were supervised by a Political Agent on behalf of the Government of India, it possessed a certain independence in arranging its domestic concerns. The Native States no longer exist; and while there has doubtless been some gain in administrative efficiency, for not all of them were wholly admirable, those of us who have known and loved the country cannot but regret the total disappearance of one of India's more picturesque albeit crazier aspects.

In 1921 he went back, this time for six months and as private secretary to the Maharaja, and *The Hill of Devi* (the title refers to the sacred hill overlooking the city of Dewas) consists of letters written during the two periods by Mr. Forster to his mother and one or two friends. The correspondence is interspersed

**The Hill of Devi.* By E. M. FORSTER. Edward Arnold. 15s.

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with a commentary which elucidates obscure points in the letters and describes the background against which they were written. It would be absurd, as I have already suggested, to suppose that it does no more than this. In point of fact the whole thing builds up gradually into a wonderfully complete picture of the Maharaja, whom we see eventually in the round, and incidentally of Mr. Forster himself; indeed this is, in my opinion, the most personal book he has ever written, and for me therefore the most important.

I think that in general any book ought to stand on its own; it should not normally be necessary, for complete understanding, to have to refer to some previous work. *The Hill of Devi* does stand on its own, but its full and inner meaning can be better understood by reference to a little pamphlet Mr. Forster published in 1939 (*What I believe*—reprinted in *Two cheers for democracy*). He said at that time:

> I have to live in an Age of Faith—the sort of epoch I used to hear praised when I was a boy. It is extremely unpleasant really. It is bloody in every sense of the word. And I have to keep my end up in it. Where do I start?
>
> With personal relationships. Here is something comparatively solid in a world full of violence and cruelty. Not absolutely solid, for Psychology has split and shattered the idea of a "Person," and has shown that there is something incalculable in each of us, which may at any moment rise to the surface and destroy our normal balance. We don't know what we are like. We can't know what other people are like. How, then, can we put any trust in personal relationships, or cling to them in the gathering political storm? In theory we cannot. But in practice we can and do. Though A is unchangeably A or B unchangeably B, there can still be love and loyalty between the two. For the purpose of living one has to assume that the personality is solid, and the "self" is an entity, and to ignore all contrary evidence. And since to ignore evidence is one of the characteristics of faith, I certainly can proclaim that I believe in personal relationships.
>
> Starting from them, I get a little order into the contemporary chaos. One must be fond of people and trust them if one is not to make a mess of life, and it is therefore essential that they should not let one down. They often do. The moral of which is that I must, myself, be as reliable as possible, and this I try to be.

I have quoted this extract at some length because it illuminates, I think, a particular remark in *The Hill of Devi* which seems to have baffled many people.

THE Maharaja of Dewas Senior was nine years younger than Mr. Forster, and in many ways he seems to have been typical of his class. His early years were full of promise and he did brilliantly at college. He was sensitive, high-spirited, and suspicious, and while still quite young he married the daughter of a nearby ruler. He was deeply in love with her; politically and dynastically everything seemed to be perfect. He might have become the perfect ruler of a model State. But he was also nonsensical and elusive, much given to meditation; indeed we are told that his religion was the deepest thing in him. It is difficult, it may even be impossible for anyone who has been brought up in the Christian tradition of the West, fully to understand what a religious Hindu believes. Mr. Forster would not, I imagine, claim to have solved the problem, but his friendship with the Maharaja did illuminate the subject; it enabled him to regard it with a tolerance unusual in Europeans. The Maharaja is described as "certainly a genius and possibly a saint," and it is this remark that has puzzled many readers. After all, here is a man who started well, but who turned out not to be a success. He maladministered his state, got into debt, and gave the Government of India a great deal of trouble. He was not even frank when invited by British officials to be so. Besides, there was even some suggestion that when eventually he fled to Pondicherry, the retirement had been premeditated: "Valuables had been despatched there beforehand, everything had gone there, down to the last poor symbols of royalty, even the silver trappings had been torn off the howdahs and had gone." He seemed at last to be bent on his own destruction. "Then," says Mr. Forster, "the darkness thickens, the distortions of disease and approaching dissolution increase, and in December 1937 Bapu Sahib died. His body was cremated according to his ancestral rites and his ashes were swallowed up by the sea."

In the orthodox Christian sense, the Maharaja of Dewas was most certainly not a saint; but this surely is not the only interpretation. If we read this account of his life with an understanding of Mr. Forster's own beliefs, as he has described them in the passage I have quoted above, it is not difficult to come to a different conclusion. It depends, of course, upon the point of view. The Maharaja was on the whole a bad and inefficient ruler; he certainly let the

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Government of India down. But he remained steadfast in his personal relationships. Towards the end he seems to have become infuriating and intractable, but love and loyalty to his friends never wavered. I believe that for Mr. Forster this is what constitutes a kind of saint-hood. It may be that I have paid too much attention to what is probably a minor point; but it has interested me to try to interpret what I know has baffled others.

THERE is an inevitable wistfulness in the re-discovery of past happiness, but in this book the note of pathos is no more than an under-tone; the prevailing key is gay and lighthearted.

Mr. Forster occupies such a special and distinguished position in the literary world (to which his contributions have in the main had a serious purpose) that it is perhaps difficult for those who have not been privileged to know him to think of him in a comic role. He has, however, an immense sense of fun which seems only to increase with the years. I hope he will not feel offended if I also note that he is not very efficient in the ordinary affairs of everyday life. It has never mattered overmuch since there have always been, there always will be, friends to take over the bothersome details. But the idea of Mr. Forster being charged with looking after some-one else's affairs seems to me uproariously funny; there could hardly have been a less efficient private secretary. However, the gain is wholly ours, for it is difficult, without laughing aloud, to read the letters in which he describes his attempts to cope with the failing water-supply in Dewas, the details of a state banquet, or the ordering of spare parts for an aged motor, to note but a few of his incongruous duties. Only a Gilbertian character such as the Maharaja undoubtedly was could have stood it. But, of course, he did not really need a private secretary; what he asked of Mr. Forster was friendship and understanding, and both were given him to the full.

Incidentally, at least one of the several illustrations adds greatly to the comic element in this book. It is opposite page 92 and is entitled simply "H.H.'s Private Secretary." On closer inspection it turns out to be a photograph of the author himself in a most elaborate Indian costume and wearing on his head a "creation" that might well have been designed by a fashionable milliner. The general

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effect is enchanting; and while I find it extremely funny this may well be due to my lack of a sense of fitness. After all, we do not find it strange that Indians should wear Western dress when they are living in this country.

THE months spent in Dewas undoubtedly influenced the writing of *A Passage to India*, but this is not a source book in the accepted meaning of the term. The novel was indeed begun after the first brief visit in 1912, but Mr. Forster tells us that although he took the little he had already written out with him to India, intending to finish the book while he was there, he found it impossible and had to put it aside until he returned to England. I have recently re-read it, and found it strangely out of date: Britain's relations with the peoples of India have changed so much since the book was written that some of the episodes described in it already seem incredible, and this feeling is likely, I think, to increase with the years. The odd thing is that although *The Hill of Devi* is in a sense an even earlier work, it has a sort of urgency and feeling for the present that I no longer feel in the novel, and it is in my opinion an altogether better book about India.

Towards the end, Mr. Forster writes that he is not concerned to rehabilitate the Maharaja's memory, still less to present him as an object of pity. He notes:

> Men have always misinterpreted the past and always will misinterpret it: the past must be left to its own dead who knew that it was alive. But I do offer him as a subject for study. From start to finish, from the days when he behaved well and was officially petted down to the days when he misbehaved and was punished, he was never simple, never ordinary, never deaf to the promptings which most of us scarcely hear. His religion was the deepest thing in him. It ought to be studied—neither by the psychologist nor by the mythologist but by the individual who has experienced similar promptings. He penetrated into rare regions and he was always hoping that others would follow him there. He was never exclusive, despite his endless pujahs. To recall the conversation that we had forty years ago in an upper room at Delhi, he was hopeful that we should all be recalled to the attention of God.
>
> One of the puzzling things about the dead is that it is impossible to think of them evenly. They all go out of sight and are forgotten, they all go into silence, yet we cannot help assigning some of them a tune. Most of those whom I have known leave no sound behind them, I cannot evoke them though I would like to. He has the rare quality of evoking himself, and I do not believe that he is here doing it for the last time.

This warm-hearted and generous tribute to a friend is filled from beginning to end with love and loyalty. It has given me more pleasure than anything else Mr. Forster has written. It is also a valuable and authentic record of a way of Indian life that has now completely disappeared; but that is the least important aspect of this very remarkable book.

John Morris

THE LANDSCAPE OF A MIND

IT IS not commonly stated, but is nevertheless so true that it ought to be recognised as a truism, that we may know a writer through his works better than we can know even the most intimate of friends. The shape and landscape of the mind are revealed and illuminated by innumerable gleams and touches, in an inside interior way, concealed even during hours of murmured conversation over dying embers in the confidential twilight. Lovers themselves, in the depths of the secret night, withhold the complete picture, not intentionally, but because of their own unawareness, their ignorance of the deeper levels of their own selves.

The writer betrays himself willy-nilly. He tells us things about himself that he has forgotten, or scarcely knows. We pick up his small recurrent symbols, which he believes to be as

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private to himself as the gap of a lost tooth. Not interesting enough to relate, too personal a tiny worry, yet in the aggregate making up a fraction of his daily life; one of the little things that tot up in their mosaic or in their million stitches to compose the pavement, or the tapestry furnishing his rooms.

All this by preamble, but, to bring a generalisation down to practical evidence, I remember the startled look Virginia Woolf once gave me when I asked why she was always dragging in sea-buckets and spades, and sending little crabs scuttling through rock-pools. She had not realised it, but supposed ("Now that you say so") a hark-back to her childhood at St. Ives. And moths, why was she so haunted by moths? They were always flying in, the moment anyone opened a window. She had written about the death of a moth; she had intended to call one book *The Moths*, instead of *The Waves*. Ah, that she could easily explain: in her youth she used to put grease-bands round the apple trees and go out with a torch and a jam-pot after dark. And leaves—why this preoccupation with leaves? Leaves seen against the sky; leaves green; leaves browning; leaves fluttering down, blown about a London street; leaves decaying; leaves everywhere. But I forgot to ask her that.

Now come the extracts from the diary* she kept, irregularly, from 1915 to within four days of her death in 1941, a deliberate revelation and pitiless self-examination of that strange make-up which was her mind. She regarded it as good practice, rather as an athlete regards his exercises for limbering up.

> It loosens the ligaments. Never mind the misses and the stumbles. Going at such a pace as I do, I must make the direct and instant shots at my object, and thus have to lay hands on words, choose them and shoot them with no more pause than is needed to put my pen, in the ink. Moreover there looms ahead of me the shadow of some kind of form which a diary might attain to. I might in the course of time learn what it is that one can make of this loose, drifting material of life, finding another use for it than the use I put it to, so much more concisely and scrupulously, in fiction. What sort of diary should I like mine to be? Something loose-knit and yet not slovenly, so elastic that it will embrace anything, solemn, slight, or beautiful that comes into my mind. I should like it to resemble some deep old desk, or capacious hold-all, in which one flings a mass of odds and ends without looking them through.

In such a hold-all, rummaging, what may we expect to find? It is not unlike her own Elizabethan lumber room. There are brightly coloured silks, and some blood-stained rags; a dagger; a portrait quickly sketched; the sudden gleam of a jewel. She has pitched everything in; we can pick it over, intruders guiltily learning. We will leave the blood-stains and the gems until the last, and look first at the silks, the scarves she has worn for an outside show, the things she would not resent anyone seeing.

> I want fun. I want fantasy. I want to give things their caricature value and still this mood hangs about me. . . .
>
> What sort of summer do I desire? Now that I have £16 to spend, I feel freer; can afford a dress and a hat, so may go about a little, if I want. . . .
>
> What I mostly am: very rapid, excited, amused, intense. . . .

These are her high spirits, reminding us of that apparently incongruous episode when she had dressed herself up as an attendant upon a

* *A Writer's Diary*. Being Extracts from the Diary of VIRGINIA WOOLF. Edited by Leonard Woolf. The Hogarth Press. 18s.

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METHUEN

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bogus Sultan of Zanzibar. Not a very creditable episode, but there can be no doubt that she liked a lark. Her attitude towards people must come under the same heading; she was endlessly amused, entertained, and inquisitive: we learn that she prided herself on her ability to stir conversation into a swirl; and enjoyed inventing her acquaintances, which indeed she did in real life far more successfully than in her fiction. No-one could seem dull to her, with her capacity for making people up; the portrait might bear no relation to reality, or perhaps she had a reality of her own. Yet people were a worry, for she was much sought after, and the interruption got between her and what she most wanted to do: she has again been held up by her accursed love of talk. "Incessant company," she writes in a moment of excerbation, "is as bad as solitary confinement." For there was only one thing she wanted to do, and that was to live her own arduous inner life as a writer.

It is here that we begin to reach the depths and to uncover both the anguish and the ecstasy. To lead this life was perhaps harder for her than for most writers, not only for reasons of health but because the balance of what she wanted to say and the way in which she wanted to say it was so exceedingly precarious; how to keep the flight of the mind, as she puts it, and yet to be exact. A false step, and she will be off the stretched wire. It is the problem of seeing with the intensity natural to her, and at the same time of exercising the craftsman's control; the eternal problem of the artist, in her case rendered the more acute by her peculiar temperament and the ever-experimental character of her work. What she was reaching after we shall never quite know, and perhaps she did not quite know it herself. There is a groping, and from time to time a hint, a moon of light at the end of a tunnel; but of the intensity there can be no question. There is the "extraordinary exhilaration, that ardour and lust of creation"; her brain is "ferociously active"; she is just finishing one book, and already the next one is becoming "absolutely wild, like being harnessed to a shark"; and there is "that exciting layer . . . when my mind works so quick it seems asleep, like the aeroplane propellers"; but in the midst of all the excitement comes the familiar dejection: her brain is like a scale, one grain pulls it down; yesterday it balanced, today it dips. Few people, she cries, can be so tortured by writing as she is. Yet there is no escape; this insatiable desire to write something before she dies, this ravaging sense of the shortness and feverishness of life, make her cling, like a man on a rock, to her one anchor. We are told all this; we follow the processes of creation in detail, from conception to birth; we share her struggles, her triumphs; when it goes badly, when it goes well; when she can write perhaps only fifty words in a morning, or when everything clarifies and ideas crowd so tumultuous that she can scarcely snatch at them as they whirl past. We discover her extraordinary sensitiveness to praise and blame; unpraised, she finds it hard to start writing in the morning; she minds when old Hugh (Walpole) comes to see her and says nothing about *The Years*; a bad review makes all the lights sink and her reed bend to the ground. There is a touching little note, headed *Reflection*, to the effect that it is presumably a bad thing to look through articles, reviews, etc. to find one's own name; yet she often does. All the same, for her courage equalled her frailty, criticism in the end acted as a stimulus, producing the reaction of defiance, and a determination to continue along her own queer path whatever the *T. L. S.* or the *N. S. & N.* might say.

We may smile at her uncertainties, but there is no smiling at the profound sense of tragedy which underlay her high spirits and her fun. Outright she says that no one knows how she suffers, walking up a London street, nor how deep is her great lake of melancholy. She was given neither to exaggeration nor to the use of big words, but there is an illuminating phrase about the terror at night of things generally wrong in the universe, which recalls with painful conviction a conversation I once had with her during a nocturnal thunderstorm on a Burgundian hill-top, when she was, I surmise, too much frightened to go to bed, and physical fear released the founts of spiritual horror.

Still, one must suppose that her most constant preoccupation was with her writing; at least that is the impression conveyed by the extracts from the diary. (We are at a disadvantage in not knowing what has been omitted.) Her friends will recognise many familiar plaints; if her books are not novels, then what are they? and she is told repeatedly that she has no gift for depicting men and women as they

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are, with the possible exceptions of Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay in *To the Light-house*. These accusations appear to annoy her, yet as the years go by the diary makes it clearer and clearer that she had no desire to follow obediently in the accepted tradition of narrative and characterisation. She is in pursuit of something far more elusive, which could be attained only by oblique methods of her own. She was trying to do something very difficult, trying to express the inexpressible, like someone gifted with seeing a colour not visible to human eyes, or hearing a sound not audible to human ears. She was perfectly well aware that her interests as a writer—she calls it her *only* interest—lay in "some queer individuality of my own, not in strength, or passion, or anything startling, but then I say to myself, is not 'some queer individuality' precisely the quality I respect?" And then, her acumen as a critic suddenly shooting out its chameleon tongue, she captures Donne and Peacock into the same company as herself.

Her century was not that of Donne or Peacock; her century was the first half of the twentieth, and she was very much a daughter of that age. Her time-sense alone should suffice to prove it; as acutely aware of Time as Proust, though in her own different way, she could discard this framework of our lives, her theory being, as she says, that time shall be utterly obliterated and that the actual event practically does not exist, nor time either. One incident—say the fall of flowers—might contain it. Is life very solid or very shifting? This moment she stands on, it goes down to the bottom of the world. Yet it is also transitory. And what is reality? Not the same to her as to other people. She is after a No-Man's Land. She sees that there are four dimensions in human life: the I and the not I, the outer and the inner—exciting to grope on like this—she fancies, sometimes, that this is the most necessary thing to her; that which she seeks. Reality, she calls it; perhaps this is her gift, that which distinguishes her from other people. She sees life—and consequently, fiction—in strata or layers; "the upper air" she calls the top layer, contemptuously, and rejoices when she feels that she can pass from outer to inner and inhabit eternity. And all the time, as we read, we wait for the word which becomes less and less evitable. It arrives. She refers to the "mystical poetical work" she wants to come next. Mystical was perhaps the last epithet we should ever have expected Virginia Woolf to apply to herself, but it is the operative word, and we should have remembered that, with all her vagabond genius, she was also the finest and most discerning of literary critics, even when she turned her searchlight on to herself.

V. Sackville-West

FIVE NOVELS

In his notable analysis of attitudes among Iron Curtain intellectuals, *The Captive Mind*, Czeslaw Milosz describes the type of acid test which one of them might apply to a work of human thought (in this case, poetry, but almost equally apposite to the novel). "It must withstand the test of brutal naked reality . . . only that being worth while which can preserve its validity in the eyes of a man threatened with instant death. . . . In the intellectuals who lived through the atrocities of war in Eastern Europe, there took place what one might call the elimination of emotional luxuries. . . . They consider the literature of erotic complications, still popular in the West, as trash. . . . They want bread, not hors d'œuvres."

While probably few reviewers in the West have had to deliver judgement on a contemporary work while lying flat in a street raked by machine-gun fire—the type of test Milosz envisages—his sort of yardstick is instinctively applied to serious works of fiction by many a present-day reader. The novel must be good for our time (all the better if for future time,

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also); it must stand up in the face of the more urgent claims of reality—a reality that has become harshly insistent during the past two decades.

Perhaps, of the novels here under review, only *The Goodly Seed* by John Wyllie would come near to satisfying the puritan severity of Mr. Milosz's standards. In the others, there is implicit either the actuality, or the nostalgic memory, of an easier time, a time of good living and of material and emotional prosperity, in which "emotional luxuries" are prevalent and permitted.

The Go Between,* L. P. Hartley's justly acclaimed near-masterpiece, is his best book yet, a civilised, beautifully written, dramatic and shapely work with a pastoral Edwardian setting. Leo Colston, the narrator, looks back fifty years, from the present, to his involvement as a twelve-year-old schoolboy in an illicit adult love affair, on a summer holiday visit to the prosperous Norfolk home of Marcus Maudsley, a wealthy school friend. Leo is a mother's darling, self-conscious, imaginative, introspective, and sedate, fascinated by the zodiacal signs, and the weaving of schoolboy spells, which bring him an accidental triumph and half convince him of his own power. Marcus's beautiful older sister, Marian (the zodiacal Virgin), for whom Leo feels a secret adoration, uses him to further her liaison with a neighbouring farmer (the Water Carrier); he becomes involved in a grown-up passion that leads with tragic inevitability to a catastrophe, which he vainly tries to avert with a benign spell, but which leaves him with brain fever and a blighted future. In a short epilogue, whose slightly melodramatic quality is the only false note in an otherwise almost flawless work, we are shown the subsequent fate of all the chief characters. Mounting suspense is beautifully woven into the narrative, the doom-laden atmosphere is enhanced by the heat wave in which the drama takes place, a mysterious note of evil is conveyed with extreme subtlety by such means as the description of the belladonna plant which Leo discovers in the disused outhouse where the final catastrophe occurs.

> . . . It was a shrub, almost a tree, and as tall as I was. It looked the picture of evil and also the picture of health, it was so glossy and strong and juicy-looking; I could almost see the sap rising to nourish it. . . . I knew that every part of it was poisonous, I knew too that it was beautiful, for did not my mother's botany book say so? I stood on the threshold, not daring to go in, staring at the button-bright berries and the dull, purplish, hairy, bell-shaped flowers reaching towards me. I felt that the plant could poison me even if I didn't touch it, and that if I didn't eat it, it would eat me, it looked so hungry, in spite of all the nourishment it was getting.

Leo's growing sense of guilt, his realisation that the grown-ups are callously making use of his innocence, is hauntingly conveyed, yet his understanding remains at a schoolboy level; he reverts, from his illicit secret errands, to pidgin-French and ingenious schoolboy insults, never leaving the region of adolescent preoccupations and pleasures. The grown-up characters are subtly and convincingly seen through the acute but uncomprehending stare of a child, while the device of reconstructing it in the memory of a sixty-year-old man gives it the depth and elegiac diffusion of emotion recollected in a regretful tranquillity, infused with humour and lyricism.

GERALD HANLEY's second novel, *The Year of the Lion*,* is a memorable and satisfying book in which the sense of Africa is conveyed with an intense feeling for the landscape, and a sensitive insight into people of all kinds. Though the action takes place at the time of the Abyssinian war, present problems are already implicit, seen through the unprejudiced eyes of Jervis, a young settler, coming fresh from England to Major Fawn-Cochley's farm.

Jervis, introduced into the group of eccentric white settlers, all "a bit cracked" as they themselves confess, suffers a first frustrated love affair with a neighbour's wife, hunts zebra and lion, witnesses violence and sudden death, and quickly matures, losing his illusions and some of his innocence, but joining "the band of white men which would never again be sure whether it wanted an Africa of literate and progressive people, geared to the wheels of the West, or like this one before him, in its tribal prime, laughing, and understanding the Africa of the forest, and the beast, and still safe in the background of their tribal world of discipline and strange freedoms. . . . He had never believed in 'the noble savage,' but he saw him

* *The Go Between*. By L. P. HARTLEY. Hamish Hamilton. 11s.

* *The Year of the Lion*. By GERALD HANLEY. Collins. 10s. 6d.

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now before him, not more savage than he, but, he felt secretly, much more noble. . . ."

Jervis begins to feel the extraordinary fascination of Africa, as does the white doctor to whom he takes a native servant who is dying of a septic arm crushed by a lion. This doctor tells him:

"You know, while you've got the chance, you should study these people. They won't be here very long, and they'll never come again." The doctor could not quite convey his sympathy for this Africa which was soon to be sick before its death and then its rebirth among the tractors and the buses and the rational life. He knew that the tribes were now poised between the long savage dream of their past and the beginning of the political mythology which soon would envelop them. The search for Utopia among the buildings and the clinics and the miles of books. To understand it eventually they would have to wear glasses. To live in it they would need rubber goods. To sin in it they would need help, instruction. . . . He would stay here to watch it, leave his bones here in the dry grass of Africa. He loved it, why, he did not know."

Hanley makes us share the spell.

JOHN WYLLIE'S *The Goodly Seed* * is a first novel of great achievement. Set in the background of a Japanese prisoner-of-war camp on a Malayan island, it tells of the struggle for the succession to the position held by the old British Commandant, dying from beri-beri through lack of the necessary vitamin injections. There are two threads in the narrative, the Commandant's choice of his successor, Van Reebek, a young Dutch half-caste officer, who is at first reluctant to accept such responsibility, but having done so, wins his spurs; and the decision which Dr. Bruin, a Dutch doctor and the Commandant's great friend, has to make: to whom he is to give the two life-saving injections which he finally obtains from the Japanese sergeant-in-charge. All the minor camp characters are convincingly drawn. The theme, acceptance of destiny and the preservation of human values in the grimmest of circumstances, is treated in a condensed and simple fashion that avoids the *longueurs* of so many war books. It is shorn of emotional luxuries, and without the hysterical note, the self-consciously underplayed heroics, the toughness for toughness' sake, of recent American war novels; contains no hepped-up indignation, no dehumanised "Japs," or brutalised sergeants—even the homicidal psychopath, who kills the camp cook in a moment of hallucination, is an understandable figure. The character of the old Commandant, "if anything too soft, too gentle, though with surprising streaks of intuitive ruthlessness," a combination of qualities which gives him a hold on all those with whom he has to deal, including the Japanese sergeant, is a moving one; he is a brave and humane old man who has triumphed over brutality and self-seeking, and made his peace with his destiny. In spite of its grim setting, it is a heartening and compassionate book, informed with a quiet sense of the heroic.

NADINE GORDIMER is a young South African writer of great gifts who has already proved herself as a short-story writer. Her first novel, *The Lying Days*,* is an original and professionally accomplished work, intensely feminine in the most interesting sense, with an obvious strain of autobiography running through it. It is the story of a girl's self-discovery, primarily through love, the background being a small mining town near Johannesburg, and Johannesburg itself. Helen, at first tied to her parents (who, with their colonial stuffiness and yearning for British gentility, are perhaps the best-drawn characters in the book), decides to leave home for Johannesburg University, instead of concentrating on marriage with a suitable youth, as her mother wishes. In Johannesburg she meets a group of defiantly bohemian intellectuals, who at first impress her, and with one of whom, Paul, a social worker among Africans, she falls in love (before this she had been in love with a young farmer and a Jewish architecture student); he is the most believable of her young men, all of whom are somewhat unconvincing figures. At the end of the book she has seen through their pretensions, become familiar with the insoluble-seeming racial and political tensions of South Africa, and is setting out alone for Europe and fresh pastures. The three threads of the narrative, self-discovery through erotic experience, social and racial problems, and her attempt to escape, are never quite woven together, nor is the interest sustained to

* *The Goodly Seed.* By JOHN WYLLIE. Secker & Warburg. 12s. 6d.

* *The Lying Days.* By NADINE GORDIMER. Gollancz. 12s. 6d.

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the end, which is disappointingly inconclusive. But Johannesburg, with its crudely materialistic outlook, its poverty of culture, and the stale bohemianism of its intellectual rebels, is a fascinatingly unfamiliar background and is drawn with astonishing authenticity—one would have liked more of it, and less of narcissistic sensibility and erotic detail. While the writing is always sensitive and exact, the author's striking powers of description tempt her to overload and overlengthen with detailed analyses of half-shades of feeling, and with almost clinical descriptions of physical minutiæ, such as the sensation of picking a scab off a grazed knee. All the same it is a book which makes one eager to read more of Miss Gordimer.

PERHAPS *Hurry on Down*,* by John Wain, might be considered open to the charge of being *hors d'œuvres* rather than satisfying bread, though it has a serious basis of social satire. It is an accomplished first novel, full of comic invention and lighthanded humour which only occasionally borders on facetiousness. The hero, Charles Lumley, is an eccentric young rebel, searching for escape from his stuffy bourgeois background, in a succession of picaresque adventures: as window cleaner, driver of export motorcars, dope runner, hospital orderly, chauffeur, and finally as highly-paid radio script writer. His antics are lively and original enough to be consistently funny—one of the high spots is a scene where Froulish, an unpublished novelist, with whom Charles lives for a time, reads extracts from his work in progress to the local literary society. The disabused attitude towards social earnestness recalls the early Waugh. Charles is unlike "the expensive young men of the Thirties who had wished to make a gesture somewhat similar to his own . . . [who] failed from the start because their rejection was moved by the desire to enter and be at one with a vaguely conceived People . . . who would, had they ever arrived, have made their lives hell." He concludes that "he must form no roots in his new stratum of society, but remain independent of class, forming roots only with impersonal things, such as places and seasons, or, in the other end of the scale, genuinely personal attachments that could be gently prized loose from all considerations involving more than two people." In the last episode, a touch of the perfunctory and stereotyped begins to be felt; luckily Wain stops just in time, leaving Charles once more rejecting the fine new cage "commanding a good view, mod. cons., main services," for the still unexplored jungle of a hate-love where he is prepared to die, though he makes us feel even this will be done brightly and entertainingly.

Alison Blair

* *Hurry on Down*. By JOHN WAIN. Secker & Warburg. 12s. 6d.

"BRILLIANT ATHENS AND US"

RELATIONS between Greeks and English, close ever since Byron gave his life at Missolonghi and Lord Elgin took away the marbles, today seem renewed, strengthened, and transformed. Rex Warner's commentary to Martin Hürlimann's almost unbelievably evocative photographs* is only one of several texts that illustrate this new philhellenism which has grown up during and since the war.

The most noticeable thing about this revival is that it is a rediscovery of a classical by way of modern Greece. True, some of its outstanding exponents are, like Rex Warner and Louis MacNeice, classical scholars: but even in them the classical element has received stimulus, shown in their work, from contemporary Greece. The recent movement originates perhaps from some remarkable British officers

* *Eternal Greece*. Commentary by REX WARNER, Photographs by MARTIN HÜRLIMANN. Thames & Hudson. 42s.

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dropped into or landed in Greece during the war, and from the impression made, about the same time, by Greek writers—notably Demetrios Capatenakis and Georges Seferis—who spent some time in London during and after the war.

The list of the new philhellenes is impressively long: Rex Warner, Louis MacNeice, Patrick Leigh Fermor, Osbert Lancaster, Laurence Durrell, Robert Liddell, Steven Runciman, Francis King, Bernard Spencer, and John Craxton are a few of them. All these approach Greece through poets like Seferis, Sikelianos, and Elytis, painters like Ghika and Tsarouchis. In common with the American writer Henry Miller, they think of Katsimbalis (hero of Miller's *Colossus of Maroussi*) as their Virgilian guide to modern Athens. He seems to stand in the central square of Athens like one of the gigantic stone lions over the entrance to the ancient ruins of Mycenae.

A revealing aspect of this rediscovered love of Greece is that it has nothing to do with current Greek politics. For none of those Englishmen mentioned can feel enthusiasm about political developments there since the war. Most of them have had to content themselves with reflecting that Greece, unlike other Balkan countries, has at least retained her independence. They suspend judgement about a good deal else. Their passion for the country is unpolitical. It implies a recognition of the fact that the politics of foreign countries in times like these are more complex than may have appeared in the 1930's. This mood of refusal to judge Greek politics, or even to take them into account, is probably as characteristic of the 1950's as taboos about Spain are a hangover from the 1930's.

MODERN Greece opens on to the "eternal Greece" not through politics, but through the landscape and the people, and through modern Greek poetry. Yet the immediacy in English minds of this "eternal Greece" where, to use Mr. Warner's words, "the place and spirit, even the achievements themselves, extend both forwards and backwards in time," takes a special contemporary form.

Mr. Warner shows us where to look for an explanation when he writes: "Very often, as I have watched the mountains or the sea of Greece it has occurred to me that some such word as 'real' or 'genuine' would most aptly describe the scene." It is the examination of this state of mind which leads us on; for this does not pretend to describe an objective "reality." It indicates, rather, a feeling which the English have had for a long time, but which they have with added intensity today.

Perhaps they feel so much pressure of the "real" in the Greek landscape because other landscapes, although not exactly unreal, are in no such immediate relation to them. Imagine a cultivated and aware Englishman of 1953 in any other landscape of any part of the world. What does he feel? For the most part the scenery must give him a sense of exclusion, envy, loss, nostalgia, and uncertainty. American landscape is the background of a drama of the future which will leave the English destiny behind. Rome, Vienna, or Venice display pasts whose conditions will never be repeated to produce another Rome, Vienna, or Venice. The whole East is seen beyond a gulf which may eventually be spanned—but which nonetheless today remains a gulf.

The reality of Greece is that there is something about the circumstances which produced its civilisation—impossible though it be to create again such art—which still remains a spiritual potentiality. The highest achievements of Athenian civilisation were communal achievements. They grew out of beliefs and the shared attitude to life of citizens, and not out of Oriental despotisms or out of vast accumulations of wealth possessed by collectors and patrons.

IT seems impossible that England should ever again produce enough art-loving, art-collecting patrons to support the whole effort of artistic creation; and the disappearance from the scene of the last collectors and patrons has produced a feeling that, in the future, England will probably have no art in the individualist tradition we are accustomed to, because there will be no individuals to support artists. But Greece seen through the eyes of the Greek landscape suggests a different conclusion; that great art and great thought can go together with austerity. More than this, they can result from a consensus of enlightened opinion in a democracy; and a shared social vision of justice, tolerance, and truth can have as complements principles of beauty, sculpted in marble, rhythmed in verse.

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So perhaps Greece holds secrets of living and of connectedness with a great past—despite the loss of everything poetry mourns for—which the English, facing immense losses, and desperately in need of their own past, can learn from.

Here it is wise, though, to become a little lost amongst complexities and contradictions. As Mr. Warner adds, after the passage quoted above about the "real" Greek scene: "But then, perhaps, the shadows of clouds will go flying over the mountain slopes, or the setting sun put a wreath of violet around the city in the plain. . . ." It would be even more to the purpose to say that "and then there could be hail, mist, or storm."

There was, as everyone knows, slavery in Attica, and when we think of Greece apart from Athens, irremediable religions, Eleusinian rites, Sparta, the Atridean horror of Mycenae which still blackens the foundations of the burned-down palace above the ruined city, the Delphic oracle, wars, and tyrannies crowd in on our consciousness.

All the same, turning back to Martin Hürlimann's photographs, we are struck by those sculptures which seem more independent of luxury, superstition, grossly materialist preoccupations, and which are more the expression of a human spirit of consent to ideal aims than any other works of any other time. The bas-relief of the stele from Cape Sunium, in which the ephebe, with one hand raised, is placing the garland of victory on his head, for example; or the dedicatory relief from Eleusis, of Demeter, Persephone and Triptolemus, with the youth standing solemnly before Demeter, receiving the ears of corn from her: these seem projections of the vision of the inner eye of a civilisation where men visualised line after line godlike, human, and universal, all at once. The fold of a dress or the outline of an upraised arm seems to define some exact edge (like the margin of an eternal wave white against an earthly shore) where the divine coincides with the human and where an idea achieves a kind of organic purity, beyond which there would lie only cold modern abstraction.

Of course, in writing this I am aware of the certainty of falling into an idealistic trap where even great scholars become bad prose poets. This is a trap that Mr. Warner does not entirely avoid. Yet ideals which can be visualised and hewn into æsthetic forms cannot just be dismissed as ideals. An ideal which is represented in art is at least the concrete expression of an agreement among a certain number of people that certain unmaterialist aims are more worth while than certain material ones.

The high consent of an élite who felt themselves a people is surely one of the attributes of Greek art, though, as Mr. Warner reminds us, not everyone consented. Pericles was reproached for lavishing Athenian treasure, which should have been spent on useful armaments, on adorning Athens "like a woman, hung round with precious stones and figures and temples, which cost a world of money."

Inevitably we are selective in our approach to any historic past which we appraise, being disposed to concentrate on that in it which is not so much a reflection of ourselves as an image of our own potentialities. Nineteenth century English schoolmasters were inclined to discover the equivalent of the public school ideal in the Greek idea of moderation. For Nietzsche, the archaic smile on the faces of

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Greek statues showed that Greek life was turned for ever towards a darkness of horror over which it triumphed, and he discovered in the Dionysian aspect of Greek poetry a power which in the modern world was only to be expressed in German music. When he wrote *The Birth of Tragedy*, Wagner's poetic music dramas appeared to him as the reincarnation of Greek poetry.

Both these views are selective, and today we would have little use for either of them, yet each contains its element of truth. Nietzsche's idea of German music (though I myself find it interesting) would seem to most people perhaps even less true than the English public school view of Greek moderation. All the same, in its simplification Nietzsche's view remains the more significant, because its simplicity derives from a grasp of the complexity of Greece.

THE Acropolis was crowded with painted images, some of them adorned with ivory and gold. Today we reject the ivory and gold, which hardly bear thinking of, just as, unlike the 19th century writers, we reject the later Greek sculpture, having a bias of our own towards the archaic. The Greece we have chosen out of the many epochs and the many city-states is nevertheless real to us because, like the Christianity we choose out of a hundred Christianities, it states the immense hypothesis of the feasible in *our* actions and *our* lives.

It may well be that the famous speech of Pericles from which Mr. Warner quotes is a supreme example of Athenian "sales talk" to posterity. Yet this is useful and therefore "genuine" and "real" to us. "Our love of what is beautiful does not lead to extravagance; our love of things of the mind does not make us soft. We regard wealth as something to be properly used rather than as something to boast about. As for poverty, no one need be ashamed to admit it: the real shame is not taking practical measures to escape from it. Here each individual is interested not only in his own affairs but in the affairs of the state as well; even those who are mostly occupied with their own business are extremely well informed on general politics."

During the past twenty years, the English have lived through the most generous and courageous years of their history. They have endured great losses and impoverishment, but, more than any other nation, they have taken steps to overcome these evils. All parties have agreed to aim at achieving the greatest possible social justice, shared by the whole community, while combining this with the greatest possible degree of individual freedom. In doing this, other countries may learn from England, because the problems we are attempting to solve are those of the whole world.

With all this to our credit, we have allowed ourselves to become discouraged. Perhaps, at root, the discouragement is the sadness of our culture, whose future we have allowed ourselves to despair of. Yet the complement to the goal of social justice is the creation of objects of beauty, recognised and accepted by the socially just society. Perhaps the passionate philhellenism of which Rex Warner's commentary is an example, has as its reason a feeling that the Greek conception of artistic creation and, indeed, the enjoyment of life as parts of the shared life of the community, open up the way for a new period of English achievements in the arts, more than any other past or present example.

Stephen Spender

Readers of Robert Graves' article, "Juana Inés de la Cruz," in our December number will be interested to learn that an English translation of her verse will be published very shortly by Faber and Faber. The translations have been made by Professor C. C. McIntyre, and the original Spanish text appears alongside the translation.

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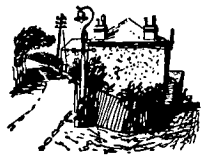

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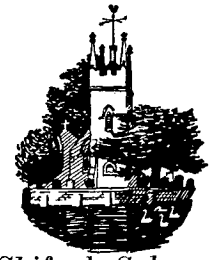

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